REPRESENTATIVE BRITISH DRAMAS

VICTORIAN AND MODERN

By Montrose J. Moses

THE AMERICAN DRAMATIST
REPRESENTATIVE BRITISH DRAMAS
REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL ONE-ACT PLAYS
CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND READING
HENRIK IBSEN: THE MAN AND HIS PLAYS
A TREASURY OF PLAYS FOR CHILDREN
REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL DRAMAS

REPRESENTATIVE BRITISH DRAMAS

VICTORIAN AND MODERN

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO EACH PLAY

BY

MONTROSE J. MOSES

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TO

LEWIS FREEMAN MOTT

WHO HAS DEVOTED SO MANY YEARS TO AWAKENING IN OTHERS A KEEN APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

PREFACE

The story is told of Douglas Jerrold that a friend once came to him and said, "*Punch* is not as good as it used to be." And Jerrold, with his usual conversational preparedness, replied, "My dear fellow, it never was."

The same anecdote might be utilized in describing the condition of the English stage during its successive periods. There have always been those who took the darkest view of theatrical conditions; to them the English stage never has been worth while. There always will be those who are looking for a drama other than that which is being given them.

But it is true that the English stage never fell upon duller or more arid times than the period between 1800 and the commencement of the so-called "New Drama." One might almost be tempted to say that the last great play written in England was "The School for Scandal"; and probably to this might be added Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer." Artificial though these may be in their depiction of the comedy of manners, they nevertheless give a criticism of life and character which remains universal and which, in its satire, has something of the life-commentary characteristic of La Fontaine and Molière. There is not a drama written in England between the time of Sheridan or Goldsmith and 1880 that may lay claim to any perennial freshness.

We might explain the poverty of the British stage, after the freeing of the theatres in 1843, by saying that for a long period it had no real true social basis. The freeing of the theatres did not mean, in any true sense of the word, the freedom of the theatre. For, no sooner was the ban lifted on the presentation of Shakespeare in patented houses, than a wildcat competition arose, which resulted in the cheapening of theatrical performances, and in the unthinking exploitation of the French drama.

What was best in the theatre was kept alive by those actors who took unto themselves the robe of splendour bequeathed them by David Garrick. When one has considered certain historical facts which explain the reasons for the romantic dramas of Sheridan Knowles and Bulwer-Lytton, which give an economic basis for the adaptations from the French, and which set the artistic reasons for the form of drama practised by those dramatists who contented themselves with a pale imitation of Shakespeare and Racine, there is created a clear impression of certain well-defined channels of development in the British theatre of the nineteenth century. Blot out the personalities of David Garrick, Kean, the Kembles, including Mrs. Siddons, Macready, and Samuel Phelps, and you blot out a very large section of the British drama.

The romantic revival in England was a pale imitation of Elizabethan imagery and strength. From the days of Garrick to the time of Irving, the British drama was influenced by the individual actor, rather than by any deep social conscience.

And for that reason bombast took the place of literary style, and this bombast succeeded simply because it afforded a diction which a distinctive group of players was able to gild into some semblance of reality and truth.

The present book bears the title, "Representative British Dramas: Victorian and Modern." There was a very distinct cleavage between the drama of the early period of the nineteenth century and of the later — a cleavage due to no sudden revolution, but to a gradual realization of the democratic idea in England — a gradual rise in importance of the people, from 1832, when the reform bills began to leave their impress on the mass, and to emphasize conditions of labour and of the working classes. In its actual effect on the literature of the time, this social interest resulted in a sentimental attitude which was behind the establishment of Sunday schools in England, and behind the evolution of a certain type of story and of school-book written to appeal to definite strata of society.

It has been the object of the Editor to select those plays which would emphasize definite characteristics in the development of the British drama of the nineteenth century, beginning with the pseudo-romantic, and passing through the successive periods which would reveal how completely drama was divorced from literature, and how sorely dramatic diction suffered because of its utter lack of literary style. Whatever style the British drama had before the advent of Jones and Pinero and Oscar Wilde was preserved in the poetic dramas of Browning and Tennyson — where style was accounted more than action. This is why the plays by Browning and Tennyson are of value in nineteenth-century drama. They were given on the stage of the time, but they failed of marked success, separate from the successes bestowed upon the individual actors, whose artistic bravery was the reason for their production.

In the Introductions to all of the plays included in this volume, the Editor has endeavoured to state those principal events in the British drama of the nineteenth century which would point to progressive ideas gaining headway. From the time of Bulwer-Lytton's parliamentary activities in the cause of the theatre, to the present, there have been innumerable workers who have upheld the real freedom of the British stage, who have fought consistently against the cloying limitations of censorship, and who have believed persistently in, and pled continually for, the endowment of the theatre, pointing to what endowment has done for the French stage. There have been those who have battled against the prejudices of the British public, and for freedom of thought and speech on the stage — all of these mile-posts in dramatic progress have been indicated in their proper places.

There will also be emphasized the burlesque spirit which dominated the English stage for so long a while, and which was kept alive largely by members of the editorial staff of *Punch*. If *Punch* has been for so many generations the guardian of English humour, that famous weekly has likewise done much to encourage a most light and trivial attitude toward the British stage — the attitude which reacted on such a writer as Thackeray, who regarded burlesque and pantomime, as well as the extravaganza of make-believe, in the theatre very much as a child would regard them.

More than once, during the course of the Introductions, it has been emphasized that another reason for the poverty of the British stage, before the advent of the "New Drama", was the lack of any just copyright law. This lack made it possible for the British theatre managers to have translated freely whatever they liked of current French productions. The native dramatist could find no encour-

agement for original work, but had to sink his talents to the level of a hack translator. There was a great demand for the tried French successes, and thus many a British play cost the manager a mere pittance, but cost the English playwright his artistic soul.

There is no telling what the history of the British stage might have been, had the censorship, which was bequeathed to it through the beneficent guardianship of Sir Robert Walpole, not persisted through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. It was fostered by Victorian purity and smugness, and to its monumentally pernicious credit must be placed the damning truth that it has kept from the British stage, for over a century, any thought reflective of the true attitude of mind and soul of the progressive thinkers in England. It will be emphasized, in the Introductions, in what manner censorship has been evaded, and through what opposition progressive thought has had to advance in order to avoid the cloying hand of an anachronistic public official, the Reader of Plays. Had it not been for the censor, the British dramatists would probably have been more fearless and more far-reaching in their criticism of life. The British drama of intellectual worth has developed in spite of the Reader of Plays, and in defiance of English law.

Another real concern which, for many years, has agitated the English stage has been the need for an Endowed Theatre. Out of this has grown the actual workings of the Repertory Theatre, and the many agitations for a playhouse relieved of the necessity for commercial competition.

Matthew Arnold raised the cry when, after having seen Sarah Bernhardt in London for the first time, he uttered some thoughts regarding the difference between the drama in England and the drama in France. The substance of his plea was — organize the theatre.

It is this spirit which has actuated Henry Arthur Jones, William Archer, Granville Barker, St. John Hankin, and all those identified with the repertory theatres of England and the Provinces, in their arguments for the governmental recognition of the theatre.

The Table of Contents will indicate the scope of the present collection. The plays herein have all had their stage production. There has been no attempt to emphasize that species of play represented by George Meredith's "The Sentimentalists" and Thomas Hardy's "The Dynasts." On the other hand, limitations of copyright have prevented the inclusion of any play by George Bernard Shaw, James M. Barrie, and Stephen Phillips. This omission takes from the present review of modern drama three important characteristics, — one represented by Shaw as an upholder of the thesis play, another represented by Barrie as the one true exponent of fantasy, and the third represented by Phillips as a follower of the poetic drama. But the characteristics of these three important figures in current British drama are so well known to the public that whatever this present collection may lack through their absence can be readily supplied by general knowledge.

It has been thought wise to make a separate group of the Irish plays, which represent such a distinct development. One might argue that if this is to be done, some indication should be given of the richness of such a Welsh play as J. O. Francis's "Change", or of such local characteristics as are to be found in "Bunty Pulls the Strings." The limitations of space, however, preclude any minute lines being drawn.

The Editor has to thank personally Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, Mr. John Masefield, Lady Gregory, Mr. W. B. Yeats, and Mr. Padraic Colum for their coöpera-

tion, and for their courteous granting of permission to use their plays. In addition to which, thanks are due to the publishers of Pinero, Galsworthy, Barker, Hankin, Synge, and Dunsany, for extending the courtesies of copyright. Acknowledgment has to be made to certain magazines in which a small proportion of the material here used in the Introductions was originally published. Throughout the preparation of the entire work, the Editor has had the splendid encouragement and invaluable assistance of his wife.

It is significant that such a collection as this should be issued at a time when the Great War is making a cleavage between things that were before August, 1914, and things that are to be. The present volume may, therefore, be said to close an era in the history of the British stage. When the book is opened on a new era, one may expect a drama that has characteristics as distinct from those of the "New Drama", so called, as the differences existing between the "New Drama" and the plays of the Tom Robertson period.

Montrose J. Moses.

New York, April, 1918.

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VIRGINIUS

(1820)

By James Sheridan Knowles

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES

(1784–1862)

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES, the cousin of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and the friend of Hazlitt, Lamb, and Coleridge, was born on May 12, 1784. His career as a playwright overshadows the fact that he had studied medicine with an idea of following that profession. His experiences as an actor are likewise overshadowed by his friendship with and writing for other actors much greater than he. It was for Kean that he prepared "Leo; or, The Gipsy" and "Caius Gracchus." It was for Kean, also, that he first conceived "Virginius", which play connects his activities with those of John Howard Payne, who had also written a drama on the same subject for the same actor. A long list of plays is to the credit of Knowles, the most significant, other than the ones mentioned, being "The Hunchback" (1832), "The Wife" (1833), and "The Love Chase" (1837).

Knowles flourished at a time characterized by a special type of acting. He grew up in the atmosphere of critics like Hazlitt and Lamb, who were much more interested in a type of comedy celebrated in their dramatic essays, than in any product of an original nature; and they were given to the expending of much more attention on the human excellencies of the actor's art. What they found of value in Knowles was what Knowles imitated of the old type of English tragedy or comedy. Charles Lamb wrote the prologue to "The Wife", spoken by Mr. Warde. No one seemed to know that the prologue was written by him; Knowles's acknowledgment in the preface to the play was misleading, for it read as follows:

> To my early, my trusty, and my honoured friend, Charles Lamb, I owe my thanks for a delightful Epilogue composed almost as soon as it was requested. To an equally dear friend I am equally indebted for my Prologue.

The Epilogue was spoken by Miss Ellen Tree.

The esteem in which Knowles was held by his friends is measured by the estimate of him in William Hazlitt's "The Spirit of the Age." In this he writes:

> We should not feel that we had discharged our obligations to truth or friendship, if we were to let this volume go without introducing into it the name of the author of "Virginius." This is the more proper, inasmuch as he is a character by himself, and the only poet now living that is a mere poet. If we were asked what sort of a man Mr. Knowles is, we could only say "he is the writer of 'Virginius.'" His most intimate friends see nothing in him by which they could trace the work to the author. The seeds of dramatic genius are contained and fostered in the warmth of the blood that flows in his veins; his heart dictates to his head. The most unconscious, the most unpretending, the most artless of mortals, he instinctively obeys the impulses of natural feeling, and produces a perfect work of art. He has hardly read

a poem or a play, or seen anything in the world, but he hears the anxious beatings of his own heart, and makes others feel them by the force of sympathy. Ignorant alike of rules, regardless of models, he follows the steps of truth and simplicity; and strength, proportion, and delicacy are the infallible results. By thinking of nothing but his subject, he rivets the attention of the audience to it. All his dialogue tends to action, all his situations form classic groups. There is no doubt that "Virginius" is the best acting tragedy that has been produced on the modern stage. Mr. Knowles himself was a player at one time, and this circumstance has probably enabled him to judge of the picturesque and dramatic effect of his lines, as we think it might have assisted Shakespeare. There is no impertinent display, no flaunting poetry: the writer immediately conceives how a thought would tell if he had to speak it himself. Mr. Knowles is the first tragic writer of the age; in other respects he is a common man; and divides his time and his affections between his plots and his fishing-tackle, between the Muses' spring, and those mountain streams which sparkle like his own eye, and gush out like his own voice at the sight of an old friend. We have known him almost from a child, and we must say he appears to us the same boy-poet that he ever was. He has been cradled in song, and rocked in it as in a dream, forgetful of himself and of the world!

It would seem that Knowles, throughout his career, was handicapped by the inadequacy of the copyright law, which robbed him of much of his income. He was continually in financial distress. Note the effect the success of "The Hunchback" had upon him when it was produced on April 5, 1832. He says:

> I sank down on my knees and from the bottom of my soul thanked God for His wondrous kindness to me. I was thinking on the bairns at home, and if ever I uttered the prayer of a grateful heart it was in that little chamber.

Very often, Knowles had to eke out his income by returning to the stage.

Knowles's "Virginius" was declined by Kean because of a rumour that a play on the same subject was scheduled for Drury Lane. The drama, however, was produced at the Glasgow Theatre in an indifferent manner, and Macready's friend, Tait, witnessed it. The dramatist and the actor had met at many social functions, and while Macready realized in him much dramatic ability, he recognized in him nothing much of an actor. He writes, after having witnessed Ellen Tree and Charles Kean in "The Wife", in which Knowles played:

> Knowles — was *Knowles;* raw, energetic, harsh, but with mind and purpose, badly and bluntly expressed, that gave interest to his performance; but he is no artist, nor, in my opinion, can he ever be such.

This was written out of the bitterness of an experience with Knowles which had somewhat cooled their friendship since the days of "Virginius."

"Virginius" was first produced on May 17, 1820, with Macready in the title rôle. Talfourd says:

> The year 1820 gave Lamb an interest in Macready beyond that which he had derived from the introduction of Lloyd, arising from the power with which he animated the first production of one of his oldest friends — "Virginius."

At the very beginning of their friendship Lamb had liked Knowles, but had not detected in him any extraordinary dramatic ability. We are told that Lamb's interest in tragedy was over-clouded by the tragedy of his own life, and that he was particularly in favour of the paternal scenes in "Virginius", which were made appealing through the great acting of Macready. Late in 1820, Lamb sent to Knowles some congratulatory verses on "Virginius." It was five years after that Crabb Robinson met Knowles at Lamb's, and records:

> A very Irishman in manners, tho' of the better kind. Seemingly a warm-hearted man. No marks of talent in his conversation, but a bold decisive tone. He spoke of William Hazlitt as his friend, and this does not speak for his discretion or moral feeling.

The friendship between Knowles and Lamb ripened, and the dramatist visited Elia at Enfield. Lamb's letters contain constant reference to him.

Macready's own words are quoted regarding "Virginius":

> After some hesitation I thought it best to get the business [of reading the MS] over, to do at once what I had engaged to do, and I sat down determinedly to my work. The freshness and simplicity of the dialogue fixed my attention; I read on and on, and was soon absorbed in the interest of the story and the passion of the scenes, till at its close I found myself in such a state of excitement that for a time I was undecided what step to take. Impulse was in the ascendant, and, snatching up my pen, I hurriedly wrote, as my agitated feelings prompted, a letter to the author, to me then a perfect stranger.
>
> I was closing my letter as the postman's bell was sounded up the street, when the thought occurred to me, "What have I written? It may seem wild and extravagant; I had better reconsider it." I tore the letter, and sallying out, hastened directly to my friend Proctor's lodgings, wishing to consult him, and test by his the correctness of my own judgment. He was from home, and I left a card, requesting him to breakfast with me next day, having something very remarkable to show him. After dinner, at a coffee-house, I returned home, and in more collected mood again read over the impassioned scenes, in which Knowles has given heart and life to the characters of the old Roman story. My first impressions were confirmed by a careful re-perusal, and, in sober certainty of its justness, I wrote my opinion of the work to Knowles, pointing out some little oversights, and assuring him of my best exertions to procure its acceptance from the managers, and to obtain the highest payment for it.

Evidently the letter of Knowles, dated Glasgow, April 20, 1820, was in reply to this communication. It runs as follows:

> My dear Sir,
>
> For bare Sir is out of the question — I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the most kind, I must not say flattering, though most flattering, letter that you have written to me. Really I cannot reply to it in any manner that will satisfy myself, so I shall only once for all repeat, I thank you! and feel as if I should never forget the opening of a correspondence with Mr. Macready. You must have a very warm heart. Do not think, I entreat you, that because I express myself imperfectly — very imperfectly — there is any deficiency where there ought not to be.

> I have but a few minutes, I should say moments, to write. All your suggestions I have attended to; I believe so, and if I have not I fully propose to attend to them, except so far as the word "squeak" is concerned; that word I know not how to lose for want of a fit substitute — the smallest possible sound. Find out a term and make the alteration yourself; or if you cannot and still wish an alteration, do what you like. I don't care about it, I merely submit the matter to you. Oh, I have forgotten the word "cheer." What shall I do also in the way of finding a substitute for that word?
>
> I cannot stop to write another line. I am very much your debtor, and truly
>
> Your grateful humble servant,
>
> J. S. Knowles.

Covent Garden promised Knowles £400 for twenty nights, and of this Macready says:

> Not one sixpence was allowed for its [the play's] mis-en-scène, and to be correct in my costumes I was obliged to purchase my own dresses. But my heart was in the work, so much so that it would seem my zeal ran the risk of outstripping discretion, for it was made a complaint by Egerton, the *Numitorius*, that the youngest man in the theatre should take on him to order and direct his elders.

There was some doubt as to whether or not "Virginius" would pass the censor, but it finally succeeded in going through the Lord Chamberlain's office, with certain passages on tyranny erased from it. These censored passages were cut from the text through the personal suggestion of George IV, who had demanded seeing the script after it had passed the official reader. Knowles sought to print the play immediately because of this. Macready consulted with John Murray, the London publisher, about issuing it. But Murray, whose reader was the Reverend H. Milman, afterwards Dean of St. Paul's, was advised to have nothing to do with the printed play. In consequence, Ridgway, of Piccadilly, issued it, and before many weeks it had passed into several editions.

Macready, being somewhat of a snob, describes how Knowles, in a condition very much the worse for wear, hunted him out while he, Macready, was at a dinner party, and presented him with a package containing the printed copy of "Virginius", which had been dedicated to him. Evidently, Macready's rude treatment of Knowles on this evening gave him some remorse, for he sent for the playwright on his return home from the dinner party, and, as he expressed it, "All was made perfectly smooth between us."

The acting part of "Virginius", given by Macready to John Forster, is now preserved, with a letter from the actor, in the Dyce and Forster Libraries, South Kensington. The letter runs as follows:

> I enclose the part of *Virginius* as delivered to me (after I read the play at Fawcett's request in his Covent Garden greenroom, April 20) from the Covent Garden copyist, poor old Hill. (You will see that even the skill of copying out parts is declined with our declining drama!) It has been in use with me above thirty years. You will smile at the Latin memoranda or suggestions to excite my feelings! These I used to write in Latin, sometimes in Greek, sometimes in Italian, because as at that time I could not command a dressing-room ex-

> clusively to myself, I did not choose that any one who might be "chummed" with me should look over, or rather should understand my notes. No fear of any of them penetrating beyond English!
>
> I send you also the identical parchment I used on my first performance of this character, and which I have kept, with a sort of superstitious partiality till it has become what you see, ever since. It amazes yet pleases me these things have interest in your eyes — they have none in mine. A deep melancholy is on me in thinking and feeling that I shall never again excite the sympathies of those to whom I feel a sort of absolute affection.

From this, one will see the sentimental affection bestowed by Macready on the part. His "Diaries" illustrate a further sentimental affection for the dramatist who wrote the play. The two men were diametrically opposed as to character, Knowles being freer in his manner than the actor, who never was devoid of self-consciousness. Knowles found himself thrust from an atmosphere of school-teacher into an atmosphere enriched by the very best literary minds of the time. Little did some of his friends realize, if tradition is true, that much of "Virginius" was written on slates in the schoolroom, where, for thirteen hours a day, Knowles was a slave to the cause of education. William Archer says:

> When we compare "Virginius" with other tragedies of the time — the works of Maturin and Sheil, for example, not to mention obscurer names — we can understand the enthusiasm awakened by the frank humanity of its subject and the rhetorical vigor of its style.

Yet no excellence of dramatic technique, nor any past favours, could ever govern Macready's temperamental attitude toward his friends. There was no motive mean enough that, at different times, Macready did not impute this motive to Knowles. In his "Diaries", during 1833, we find record of these ups and downs of friendship from month to month. Now, Macready is saying, "I would not have his genius for his heart." Again he is exclaiming that Knowles, at his "Benefit", pronounced a "eulogistic eulogium on me", an act which certainly was pleasing to the vain player. Later on, Macready is hinting at drunkenness and illicit living; and later still, he declares that Knowles was fast becoming envious of the success of Bulwer-Lytton. The entries in his "Diaries", which refer to the author of "Virginius", show very clearly that whatever financial relations the two had, they played havoc with their opinions of each other at different times.

Knowles had many sources to turn to in the construction of "Virginius." In Edward Stirling's "Old Drury Lane", there is mentioned a tragedy by R. P., published in 1576, in black letter and not divided into acts,

> Wherein [so the title-page reads] is lively expressed a rare example of the vertue of chastity in wishing rather to be slaine at her own Father's hands than to become a victim of the wicked Judge Appius.

Some commentators believe this to have been Knowles's source. But there were dramas dealing with the same subject during the seventeenth century, by Mairet Leclerc and Campistron. The reason there were so many plays on the theme of "Virginius" in the eighteenth century was due to the movement for political freedom which, beginning about the middle of the century, inspired dramatists of all nationalities to use *Virginius* as their hero. In 1772, Lessing used the

story in a modern Italian setting. In 1773, Alfieri; 1760, Miss Brooke, in England; the same year, La Beaumelle, in France; 1769, Chabanon; 1786, Laharpe; 1827, Guiraud; 1845, La Tour Saint-Ybars, utilized the theme. Students interested in a comparative study of plays will find it profitable to study these texts and note the variations.

To Knowles's play there was added a Prologue by J. H. Reynolds, and an Epilogue by the poet, Barry Cornwall. Nowhere is an impression of the poet's literary excellence better summed up than in a contemporary notice given by a reviewer in the *London Magazine* for June, 1820, in which, after recalling a play on "Virginius" by Webster, he writes of Knowles's drama in the following terms:

> The merits of "Virginius" consist in (to a certain point) the plot, which is simple without being bald: the diction too is colloquial and highly spirited; in short, it is the true language of life, which almost all authors of later years have been afraid to venture on; — there is no fustian or unnecessary mystification. . . . It is simple and free from the heavy commonplace of "Douglas", and (though with less poetry and general power) is more dramatic than W. Coleridge's "Remorse"; it is decidedly better than "Bertram."

The critic goes on to call attention to the faults in Knowles's tragedy, claiming that the play should have ended with act four; that the fifth act is marked by verbiage; and that the whole manuscript is marred by a certain play on words, the dialogue being loosely written and the lines often unbeautiful.

The reader has ample sources to turn to for a comparative study of the actors who have, at different times, played *Virginius*, from Macready to Phelps and John McCullough.

A change of heart seems to have come over the British drama with the significant political events which began in 1832. We must regard Knowles, not in the light of having a very great influence on the drama which was to follow, but as having been a distinct product of the conventions of the theatre and of the acting of his time. Nowhere is there a keener or more discerning statement regarding Knowles than in Augustin Filon's "The English Stage", where that astute French critic writes:

> He [Knowles] promised to return to Truth and Nature, the invariable programme of all attempts at reforming the drama. And, as a matter of fact, *Virginius* might be accepted in a certain sense as a return to Truth and Nature. It belonged to what we were going to call in France, twenty-five years later, the School of Common Sense. Or, if one prefers to look back instead of forward, one might say that in it the rules of Diderot and Sedaine's *Drame Bourgeois* seem to have been transferred to Roman tragedy.

In accordance with the convention of poetic drama, Knowles, in "Virginius", has resorted to alternate use of poetry and prose, his lines often being merely poetry in form only, and very commonplace in thought. No critics seem to disagree regarding the importance of Macready's acting as a contributive element in the success of "Virginius." What kept it alive on the British stage for so many years after it was written was the opportunity it offered for the display of that peculiar type of acting characteristic of Kean, the Kembles, Macready, and Samuel Phelps. Yet the emotional value of the play, as a theatrical *tour de force*, is still holding, even when read.

VIRGINIUS

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN

By JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES, Esq.

[The text is that of the London, 1820, edition.]

DEDICATION

TO WILLIAM MACREADY, ESQ.

My Dear Sir,

What can I do less than dedicate this Tragedy to you! This is a question which you cannot answer; but I can — I cannot do less; and if I could do more, I ought, and would.

I was a perfect stranger to you: You read my play, and at once committed yourself respecting its merits. This, perhaps, is not saying much for your head — but it says a great deal for your heart; and that is the consideration which, above all others, makes me feel happy, and proud, in subscribing myself,

Your grateful Friend and Servant,

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

London, May 20, 1820.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This Play was written in great haste, and, no doubt, abounds in defects — but it is a question whether it would have been less imperfect, had I taken a year to compose it. It was revolved and executed in about three months, in the midst of very numerous and arduous avocations. To a distinguished individual who suggested to me the idea of writing it, I shall ever feel grateful.

I owe the public an apology for the last act; and this is my apology — History gives two accounts of the manner of Appius's death: one, that he committed suicide; the other, that he was destroyed privately by the Tribunes. Had I selected for my catastrophe the former incident, the character of the tyrant had stood too prominent; by adopting the latter, I should have violated the respect due to a Christian audience. After having excited such an interest for Virginius, it would have been indecent to represent him in the attitude of taking the law into his own hands. I therefore adopted the idea of his destroying Appius in a fit of temporary insanity, which gives the catastrophe the air of a visitation of Providence.

I am most sensible of the very great degree in which I am indebted to the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Theatre Royal, Covent-Garden; and I beg them to believe that I feel more than I can very readily express. To forget what I owe to the Theatre where my Play was first performed, would be ungrateful; and, under any circumstances, to omit the acknowledgment of it would be unprincipled and mean. I take, therefore, this opportunity of thanking, also, the Company of the Glasgow Theatre.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MEN

Character		Description	Covent Garden, 1820	Park, 1824
Appius Claudius			Mr. Abbott	Mr. Ryder
Spurius Oppius	}	*Decemvirs*	Mr. White	Mr. Hunt
Vibulanus			Mr. Jefferies	Mr. S. Pearson
Honorius	}	*Patricians*	Mr. Norris	———
Valerius			Mr. Vedy	———
Caius Claudius	}	*Clients to Appius*	Mr. Connor	Mr. Lovell
Marcus			Mr. Claremont	Mr. Gallot
Dentatus		*A Veteran*	Mr. Terry	Mr. Barry
Virginius		*A Centurion*	Mr. Macready	Mr. Macready
Numitorius		*His brother-in-law*	Mr. Egerton	Mr. Gann
Icilius		*In love with Virginia*	Mr. C. Kemble	Mr. Wheatley
Lucius		*Brother of Icilius*	Mr. Comer	Mr. Crocker
Publius			Mr. Mears	Mr. King
Decius	}	*Soldiers*	Mr. Treby	Mr. Gourlay
Sextus			Mr. Crumpton	Mr. Wilmot
Titus			Mr. Faucit	Mr. Brydges
Servius	}	*Citizens*	Mr. Atkins	Mr. Povey
Cneius			Mr. King	Mr. Freeland

WOMEN

Virginia		*Daughter of Virginius*	Miss Foote	Mrs. Hunt
Servia		*Her nurse*	Mrs. Faucit	Miss Cushman
Female Slave			Mrs. Chipp	Mrs. Burrows

Citizens, Male and Female — Soldiers, Lictors, &c.

Scene, *chiefly Rome.*

[The passages marked with inverted commas are omitted in the representation.]

PROLOGUE

By T. Reynolds, Esq., and spoken by Miss Booth

[*Speaking behind*] Nay, Mr. Fawcett, give me leave, I pray,
The audience wait, and I must have my way. [*Enters*]
What! curb a woman's tongue! — As I'm alive,
The wretch would mar our old prerogative!
Ladies, by very dint of pertinacity,
Have I preserv'd the glory of loquacity!

Oh! could you gaze, as I am gazing now,
And see each man behind, with gathered brow,
And clenchèd hand, (tho' nought my spirit damps)
Beckoning, with threats, my presence, from the lamps:
Each, as I broke my way, declared how well
His art could woo you — to be peaceable!
One is well robed — a second greatly shines,
In the nice balance, of *cast-iron* lines;
A third can sing — a fourth can touch your tears —
A fifth — "I'll see no more!" — a fifth appears,
Who hath been once in Italy, and seen Rome;
In short — there's quite a hubbub in the Green Room.
But I — a very woman — careless — light —
Fleet idly to your presence, this fair night;
And, craving your sweet pardon, fain would say
A kind word for the poet, and his play.

To-night, no idle nondescript lays waste
The fairy, and yet placid, bower of taste:
No story, piled with dark and cumbrous fate,
And words that stagger under their own weight;
But one of silent grandeur — simply said,
As tho' it were awaken'd from the dead!
It is a tale — made beautiful by years; —
Of pure, old, Roman sorrow — old in tears!
And those you shed o'er it in childhood, may
Still fall — and fall — for sweet Virginia!

Nor doth a crownèd poet of the age,
Call the sweet spirits from the historic page!
No old familiar dramatist hath spun
This tragic, antique web, to-night — but one,
An unknown author, in a sister land,
Waits, in young fear, the fiat of your hand.

VIRGINIUS

ACT I

SCENE FIRST. — *A Street in Rome.*

[*Enter* SERVIUS *and* CNEIUS]

SERVIUS. Carbo denied a hearing!

CNEIUS. Ay, and Marcellus cast into prison, because he sued a friend of one of the Decemvirs for a sum of money he had lent him.

SERVIUS. And Appius resisted not? Appius! that in the first Decemvirate was a god to the people.

CNEIUS. Resisted not! Nay, was most loud in favour of the decree; but hither comes Virginius, who interested himself so much in Carbo's affair. He looks a little heated. Is not that Titus he is speaking to? Stand aside, Master, and listen.

[*Enter* VIRGINIUS *and* TITUS]

VIRGINIUS. Why did you make him Decemvir, and first Decemvir, too?

TITUS. We had tried him, and found him honest.

VIRGINIUS. And could you not have remained content? Why try him again to find him dishonest? Knew ye not he was a Patrician, and of the Claudian family?

TITUS. He laid down the Consulate —

VIRGINIUS. Ha! ha! ha! to be elected into the Decemvirate, and he was so; and he laid down his office of Decemvir, to be re-elected into the Decemvirate, and he is so; ay, by Jupiter! and to the exclusion of his late colleagues! Did not Titus Genutius lay down the Consulate?

TITUS. He did.

VIRGINIUS. Was he not next to Appius in the Decemvirate?

TITUS. He was.

VIRGINIUS. Did you not find him honest?

TITUS. We did find him honest.

VIRGINIUS. As honest as Appius Claudius?

TITUS. Quite as honest.

VIRGINIUS. Quite as honest! And why not re-elect him Decemvir? Most sapient people! You re-elect Appius into the Decemvirate for his honesty, and you thrust Titus out of the Decemvirate — I suppose for his honesty also! Why, Appius was sick of the Decemvirate!

SERVIUS. I never heard him say so.

VIRGINIUS. But he did say so — say so in my hearing, in the presence of the senators, Valerius and Caius Claudius, and I don't know how many others. 'Twas known to the whole body of the Senate — not that he was sick, but that he said so. Yes! yes! he and his colleagues, he said, had done the work of the Republic for a whole year, and it was now but just to grant them a little repose, and appoint others to succeed them.

TITUS. Well, well, we can only say he chang'd his mind.

VIRGINIUS. No, no, we needn't say that neither; as he had laboured in the Decemvirate, perhaps he thought he might as well repose in the Decemvirate.

TITUS. I know not what he thought. He is Decemvir, and we made him so, and cannot help ourselves. Fare you well, Virginius. Come, let's to the Forum.

[*Exeunt* TITUS, SERVIUS, *and* CNEIUS]

VIRGINIUS [*looking after them and pointing*].

You cannot help yourselves! Indeed, you cannot;
You help'd to put your masters on your backs.
They like their seat, and make you show your paces;
They ride you — sweat you — curb you — lash you — and
You cannot throw them off with all your mettle!
But here comes one, whose share in giving you

To such unsparing riders, touches me
More nearly, for that I've an interest
In proving him a man of fair and most
Erect integrity. Good day, Icilius.

[*Enter* Icilius]

Icilius. Worthy Virginius! 'tis an evil day
For Rome, that gives her more convincing proof,
The thing she took for hope, is but a base
And wretched counterfeit! Our new Decemvirs
Are any thing but friends to justice and
Their country.

Virginius. You, Icilius, had a hand
In their election. You applied to me
To aid you with my vote, in the Comitia;
I told you then, and tell you now again,
I am not pleas'd when a Patrician bends
His head to a Plebeian's girdle! Mark me!
I'd rather he should stand aloof, and wear
His shoulder high — especially the nephew
Of Caius Claudius.

Icilius. I would have pledg'd my life —

Virginius. 'Twas a high gage, and men have stak'd a higher
On grounds as poor as yours — their honour, boy!
Icilius, I have heard it all — your plans —
The understanding 'twixt the heads of the people —
Of whom, Icilius, you are reckon'd one, and
Worthily — and Appius Claudius — all —
'Twas every jot disclos'd to me.

Icilius. By whom?

Virginius. Sicinius Dentatus.

Icilius. He disclos'd it to you!
Sicinius Dentatus is a crabbed man.

Virginius. Sicinius Dentatus is an honest man!
There's not a worthier man in Rome! How now?
Has he deceiv'd me? Do you call him liar?
My friend! my comrade! old Sicinius,
That has fought in sixscore battles?

Icilius. Good Virginius,
Sicinius Dentatus is my friend — the friend
Of every honest man in Rome — a brave man —
A most brave man. Except yourself, Virginius,
I do not know a man I prize above
Sicinius Dentatus — yet he's a crabbed man.

Virginius. Yes, yes; he is a crabbed man.

Icilius. A man
Who loves too much to wear a jealous eye.

Virginius. No, not a whit! — where there is double dealing.
You are the best judge of your own concerns;
Yet, if it please you to communicate
With me upon this subject, come and see me.
I told you, boy, I favour'd not this stealing
And winding into place. What he deserves,
An honest man dares challenge 'gainst the world —
But come and see me. Appius Claudius chosen
Decemvir, and his former colleagues, that
Were quite as honest as himself, not chosen —
No, not so much as nam'd by him — who nam'd
Himself, and his new associates! Well, 'tis true,
Dog fights with dog, but honesty is not
A cur, doth bait his fellow — and e'en dogs,
By habit of companionship, abide
In terms of faith and cordiality —
But come and see me. [*A shout*]

Icilius. Appius comes!
The people still throng after him with shouts,
Unwilling to believe their Jupiter
Has mark'd them for his thunder. Will you stay,
And see the homage that they render him?

Virginius. Not I! Stay you; and, as you made him, hail him;
And shout, and wave your hand, and cry, long live
Our first and last Decemvir, Appius Claudius!
For he is first, and last, and every one!
Rome owes you much, Icilius — Fare you well —
I shall be glad to see you at my house.

[*Exit* Virginius]

[*Enter* Appius Claudius, Claudius, Sicinius Dentatus, Lucius, Titus, Servius, Marcus, *and* Citizens *shouting*]

Titus. Long live our first Decemvir!
Long live Appius Claudius!
Most noble Appius! Appius and the Decemvirate forever!
[Citizens *shout*]

Appius. My countrymen and fellow citizens,
We will deserve your favour.

Titus. You have deserv'd it,
And will deserve it.

Appius. For that end we named
Ourself Decemvir.

Titus. You could not have nam'd a better man.

Dentatus. For his own purpose. [*Aside*]

Appius. Be assur'd, we hold
Our power but for your good. Your gift it was;
And gifts make surest debtors. Fare you well —
And, for your salutations, pardon me,
If I repay you only with an echo —
Long live the worthy citizens of Rome!
[*Exit* Appius, *&c., the people shouting*]

Dentatus. That was a very pretty echo! — a most soft echo. I never thought your voices were half so sweet! a most melodious echo! I'd have you ever after make your music before the Patricians' Palaces; they give most exquisite responses! — especially that of Appius Claudius! a most delicate echo!

Titus. What means Dentatus?

Servius. He's ever carping — nothing pleases him.

Dentatus. Oh! yes — you please me — please me mightily, I assure you. — You are noble legislators, take most especial care of your own interest, bestow your votes most wisely, too — on him who has the wit to get you into the humour; and withal, have most musical voices — most musical — if one may judge by their echo.

Titus. Why, what quarrel have you with our choice? Could we have chosen better? — I say they are ten honest Decemvirs we have chosen.

Dentatus. I pray you name them me.

Titus. There's Appius Claudius, first Decemvir.

Dentatus. Ay, call him the head; you are right. Appius Claudius, the head. Go on!

Titus. And Quintus Fabius Vibulanus.

Dentatus. The body, that eats and drinks while the head thinks. Call him Appius's stomach. Fill him, and keep him from cold and indigestion, and he'll never give Appius the headache! Well? — There's excellent comfort in having a good stomach! — Well?

Titus. There's Cornelius, Marcus Servilius, Minucius, and Titus Antonius.

Dentatus. Arms, legs, and thighs!

Titus. And Marcus Rabuleius.

Dentatus. He'll do for a hand, and, as he's a senator, we'll call him the right hand. We couldn't do less, you know, for a senator! Well?

Lucius. At least, you'll say we did well in electing Quintius Petillus, Caius Duellius, and Spurius Oppius, men of our order! sound men! "known sticklers for the people" — at least you'll say we did well in that!

Dentatus. And who dares say otherwise? "Well!" one might as well say "ill" as "well." Well is the very skirt of commendation; next neighbour to that mire and gutter, "ill." "Well," indeed! you acted like yourselves! Nay, e'en yourselves could not have acted better! Why, had you not elected them — Appius would have gone without his left hand, and each of his two feet.

Servius. Out! you are dishonest!

Dentatus. Ha!

Servius. What would content you?

Dentatus. A post in a hot battle! Out, you cur! Do you talk to me?

Citizen [*from behind*]. Down with him, he does nothing but insult the people.

[*The* Crowd *approach* Dentatus, *threateningly*]

[*Enter* Icilius, *suddenly*]

Icilius. Stand back! Who'st that says, down with Sicinius Dentatus? Down with him! 'Tis what the enemy could never do; and shall we do it for them? Who uttered that dishonest word? Who uttered it, I say? Let him answer a fitter, though less worthy mate, Lucius Icilius!

CITIZENS. Stand back, and hear Icilius!

ICILIUS. What! hav'n't I voted for the Decemvirs, and do I snarl at his jests? Has he not a right to jest? the good, honest Sicinius Dentatus, that alone, at the head of the veterans, vanquished the Œqui for you. Has he not a right to jest? For shame! get to your houses! The worthy Dentatus! Cheer for him, if you are Romans! Cheer for him before you go! Cheer for him, I say!

[*Exeunt* CITIZENS, *shouting*]

DENTATUS. And now, what thanks do you expect from me, Icilius?

ICILIUS. None.

DENTATUS. By Jupiter, young man, had you thus stepped before me in the heat of battle, I would have cloven you down — but I'm obliged to you, Icilius — and hark you! There's a piece of furniture in the house of a friend of mine, that's called Virginius, I think you've set your heart upon — dainty enough — yet not amiss for a young man to covet. Ne'er lose your hopes! He may be brought into the mind to part with it. As to these curs, I question which I value more, their fawnings, or their snarlings. — I thank you, boy! Do you walk this way? — I am glad of it! Come — 'Tis a noble Decemvirate you have chosen for us! Come!

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE SECOND. — VIRGINIUS'S *House*.

[*Enter* VIRGINIUS *and* SERVIA, *with some of* VIRGINIA'S *work in her hand*]

VIRGINIUS. And is this all you have observ'd? I think
There's nothing strange in that. An L and an I,
Twin'd with a V. Three very innocent letters
To have bred such mischief in thy brain, good Servia!
Come, read this riddle to me.

SERVIA. You may laugh,
Virginius, but I will read the riddle right.
The L doth stand for Lucius; and the I,
Icilius; which, I take it, will compose
Lucius Icilius.

VIRGINIUS. So it will, good Servia.

SERVIA. Then, for the V; why, that is plain Virginia.

VIRGINIUS. And now, what conjuration find you here?

SERVIA. What should I find but love? The maid's in love,
And it is with Icilius. Look, the wreath
Is made of roses, that entwines the letters.

VIRGINIUS. And this is all?

SERVIA. And is it not enough?
You'll find this figuring where'er you look:
There's not a piece of dainty work she does —
Embroidery, or painting — not a task
She finishes, but on the skirt, or border,
In needle-work, or pencil, this, her secret,
The silly wench betrays.

VIRGINIUS. Go, send her to me —
Stay! Have you spoke to her of it?

SERVIA. I! Not I, indeed; I left that task to you —
Tho' once I asked her what the letters meant.
She laugh'd, and drew a scratch across them; but
Had scarce done so, ere her fair visage fell,
For grief that she had spoiled the cyphers — "and
"A sigh came out, and then almost a tear;
"And she did look as piteous on the harm
"That she had done, as she had done it to
"A thing had sense to feel it." Never after
She let me note her at [the] work again.
She had good reason!

VIRGINIUS. Send her to me, Servia.

[*Exit* SERVIA]

There's something here, that looks as it would bring me
Anticipation of my wish. I think
Icilius loves my daughter — nay, I know it;
And such a man I'd challenge for her husband; —
And only waited, till her forward spring
Put on, a little more, the genial likeness
Of colouring into summer, ere I sought
To nurse a flower, which, blossoming too early,
Too early often dies; "but if it springs
"Spontaneous, and, unlooked for, woos our hand

"To tend and cherish it, the growth is healthful;
"And 'twere untimely, as unkind, to check it."
I'll ascertain it shortly — soft, she comes.

[*Enter* VIRGINIA]

VIRGINIA. Well, father, what's your will?
VIRGINIUS. I wish'd to see you,
To ask you of your tasks — how they go on —
And what your masters say of you — what last
You did. I hope you never play
The truant?
VIRGINIA. The truant! No, indeed, Virginius.
VIRGINIUS. I am sure you do not — kiss me!
VIRGINIA. Oh! my father,
I am so happy when you're kind to me!
VIRGINIUS. You are so happy when I'm kind to you!
Am I not always kind? I never spoke
An angry word to you in all my life,
Virginia! You are happy when I'm kind!
That's strange; and makes me think you have some reason,
To fear I may be otherwise than kind —
Is't so, my girl?
VIRGINIA. Indeed, I did not know
What I was saying to you!
VIRGINIUS. Why, that's worse
And worse! What! when you said your father's kindness
Made you so happy, am I to believe
You were not thinking of him?
VIRGINIA. I —

[*Greatly confused*]

VIRGINIUS. Go, fetch me
The latest task you did.

[*Exit* VIRGINIA]

It is enough.
Her artless speech, like crystal, shows the thing
'Twould hide, but only covers. 'Tis enough!
She loves, and fears her father may condemn.

[*Re-enter* VIRGINIA *with a painting*]

VIRGINIA. Here, Sir.
VIRGINIUS. What's this?
VIRGINIA. 'Tis Homer's history
Of great Achilles parting from Briseïs.
VIRGINIUS. You have done it well.
The colouring is good,
The figures well design'd. 'Tis very well! —
Whose face is this you've given to Achilles?
VIRGINIA. Whose face?
VIRGINIUS. I've seen this face! Tut! Tut! I know it
As well as I do my own, yet can't bethink me
Whose face it is!
VIRGINIA. You mean Achilles' face?
VIRGINIUS. Did I not say so? 'Tis the very face
Of — No! No! Not of him. There's too much youth
And comeliness; and too much fire, to suit
The face of Sicinius Dentatus.
VIRGINIA. Oh!
You surely never took it for his face!
VIRGINIUS. Why, no; for now I look again, I'd swear
You lost the copy ere you drew the head,
And, to requite Achilles for the want
Of his own face, contriv'd to borrow one
From Lucius Icilius. [*Enter* DENTATUS]
My Dentatus,
I am glad to see you!

[VIRGINIA *retires*]

DENTATUS. 'Tis not for my news, then.
VIRGINIUS. Your news! What news?

DENTATUS. More violence and wrong from these new masters of ours, our noble Decemvirs — these demigods of the good people of Rome! No man's property is safe from them. Nay, it appears we hold our wives and daughters but by the tenure of their will. Their liking is the law. The senators themselves, scared at their audacious rule, withdraw themselves to their villas, and leave us to our fate. There are rumours, also, of new incursions by the Sabines.

VIRGINIUS. Rome never saw such days.

DENTATUS. And she'll see worse, unless I fail in my reckoning. Is that Virginia? I saw her not before. How does the fair Virginia? Why, she is quite a woman. I was just now wishing for a daughter.

VIRGINIUS. A plague, you mean.

DENTATUS. I am sure you should not say so.

VIRGINIA. Indeed he should not; and he does not say so,

Dentatus — not that I am not a plague,
But that he does not think me one, for all
I do to weary him. I am sure, Dentatus,
If to be thought to do well is to do well,
There's nothing I do ill; but it is far
From that! for few things do I as I ought —
Yet everything is well done with my father,
Dentatus.

VIRGINIUS [*goes to them*]. That's well done, is it not, my friend? [*Aside*]
But if you had a daughter, what would you do with her?

DENTATUS. I'd give her to Icilius. I should have been just now torn to pieces, but for his good offices. The gentle citizens, that are driven about by the Decemvirs' Lictors, like a herd of tame oxen, and, with most beast-like docility, only low applauses to them in return, would have done me the kindness to knock my brains out; but the noble Icilius bearded them singly, and railed them into temper. Had I a daughter worthy of such a husband, he should have such a wife, and a Patrician's dower along with her.

VIRGINIUS. I wish to speak with you, Dentatus. Icilius is a young man whom I honour, but so far only as his conduct gives me warrant. He has had, as thou knowest, a principal hand in helping us to our Decemvirs. It may be that he is what I would gladly think him; but I must see him clearly, clearly, Dentatus. "If he has acted "with the remotest understanding, "touching the views of these new "tyrants that we are cursed withal, I "disclaim him as my friend! I cast "him off forever!"

[*Exeunt* VIRGINIUS *and* DENTATUS]

VIRGINIA. How is it with my heart? I feel as one
That has lost every thing, and just before
Had nothing left to wish for! He will cast
Icilius off! — I never told it yet;
But take of me, thou gentle air, the secret —
And ever after breathe more balmy sweet —
I love Icilius! "Yes, although to thee
"I fear to tell it, that hast neither eye
"To scan my looks, nor voice to echo me,
"Nor e'en an o'er-apt ear to catch my words;
"Yet, sweet invisible confidant, my secret
"Once being thine — I tell thee, and I tell thee
"Again — and yet again." I love Icilius!
He'll cast Icilius off! — not if Icilius
Approve his honour. That he'll over do;
He speaks and looks, and moves a thing of honour,
Or honour never yet spoke — look'd, or mov'd,
Or was a thing of earth. Oh, come, Icilius;
Do but appear, and thou art vindicated.

[*Enter* ICILIUS]

ICILIUS. Virginia! sweet Virginia! sure I heard
My name pronounc'd. Was it by thee, Virginia?
Thou dost not answer? Then it was by thee —
Oh! wouldst thou tell me why thou nam'dst Icilius!

VIRGINIA. My father is incens'd with thee. Dentatus
Has told him of the new Decemvirate,
How they abuse their office. You, he knows,
Have favoured their election, and he fears
May have some understanding of their plans.

ICILIUS. He wrongs me, then!

VIRGINIA. I thank the gods!

ICILIUS. For me!
Virginia? Do you thank the gods for me?
Your eye is moist — yet that may be for pity;
Your hand doth tremble — that may be for fear;
Your cheek is cover'd o'er with blushes! What,
Oh, what can that be for?

VIRGINIA. Icilius, leave me!

ICILIUS. Leave thee, Virginia? Oh! a word — a word
Trembles upon my tongue, which, if it match
The thought that moves thee now, and thou wilt let me
Pronounce that word, to speak that thought for thee,
I'll breathe — though I expire in the extacy
Of uttering it.

VIRGINIA. Icilius, will you leave me?
ICILIUS. Love! Love! Virginia! Love! If I have spoke
Thy thought aright, ne'er be it said again!
The heart requires more service than the tongue
Can, at its best, perform. My tongue hath serv'd
Two hearts — but, lest it should o'er-boast itself,
Two hearts with but one thought. Virginia!
Virginia, speak —

[*She covers her face with her hands*]

Oh, I have loved thee long:
So much the more extatic my delight,
To find thee mine at length!
VIRGINIA. My secret's yours.
Keep it, and honour it, Icilius.

[*Enter* VIRGINIUS *and* DENTATUS *behind*]

VIRGINIUS. Icilius here!
VIRGINIA. I ask thee now to leave me.
ICILIUS. Leave thee! who leaves a treasure he has coveted
So long, and found so newly, ere he scans it
Again, and o'er again; and asks and answers,
Repeats and answers, answers and repeats,
The half-mistrustful, half-assurèd question —
And is it mine indeed?
VIRGINIA. Indeed! indeed!
Now leave me.
ICILIUS. I must see thy father first,
And lay my soul before him.
VIRGINIA. Not to-night.
ICILIUS. Now worse than ever, dear Virginia;
Can I endure his doubts; I'll lay my soul
Naked before him — win his friendship quite,
Or lose myself forever!
[*Going, is met by* VIRGINIUS]
VIRGINIUS. Stop, Icilius!
Thou seest that hand? It is a Roman's, boy;
'Tis sworn to liberty — It is the friend
Of honour — Dost thou think so?
ICILIUS. Do I think
Virginius owns that hand?
VIRGINIUS. Then you'll believe
It has an oath deadly to tyranny,
And is the foe of falsehood! By the gods,
Knew it the lurking place of treason, though
It were a brother's heart, 'twould drag the caitiff
Forth. Dar'st thou take that hand?
ICILIUS. I dare, Virginius.
VIRGINIUS. Then take it! Is it weak in thy embrace?
Returns it not thy gripe? Thou wilt not hold
Faster by it, than it will hold by thee!
I overheard thee say, thou wast resolv'd
To win my friendship quite. — Thou can'st not win
What thou hast won already! — You will stay
And sup with us to-night?
DENTATUS. To be sure he will!
VIRGINIUS. And, hark you, Sir:
At your convenient time, appoint a day
Your friends and kinsmen may confer with me —
There is a bargain I would strike with you.
Come, to the supper-room. Do you wait for me,
To lead Virginia in, or will you do it?
[ICILIUS *goes eagerly to* VIRGINIA]
Come on, I say; come on. Your hand, Dentatus. [*Exeunt*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT

ACT II

SCENE FIRST. — *A Street.*

[*Enter* PUBLIUS *and* SEXTUS]

PUBLIUS. This way! We muster at the Flaminian gate.
SEXTUS. Shall we not wait for Decius?
PUBLIUS. No; were he ten times Decius. — They'll have already begun their march. Come on!

[*Enter* NUMITORIUS]

NUMITORIUS. Do you belong to the fourth legion?
PUBLIUS. We do.
NUMITORIUS. They are upon their march, then.
PUBLIUS. I told you so. — Come on! come on!

[*Exeunt* SOLDIERS. *Enter* LUCIUS]

Lucius. Numitorius, what soldiers were those that just now parted from you?

Numitorius. Soldiers hastening to overtake the army, that's now upon its march.

Lucius. 'Tis all confirmed, then; the Sabines are in force upon our borders.

Numitorius. I pray you tell me something new! Know you not the Senate has met, and the Decemvirs have come off triumphant in spite of all opposition?

Lucius. Should they have been opposed in such a strait as this?

Numitorius. Aye, should they! They dared not have armed a single citizen without the order of the Senate; which, had they not obtained, the country would have been left naked to the foe, and then they had been forced to make room for more popular magistrates.

Lucius. Why, were they not opposed, then?

Numitorius. Did not I tell you they were opposed? Caius Claudius, Appius's own uncle, and Honorius, that noble senator, opposed them; and it was like to go against them, but for the brawling insolence of Spurius Oppius, and the effrontery of the head Decemvir, backed by the young Patricians.

Lucius. So they are empowered to take up arms?

Numitorius. To be sure they are; and they have done so. — One body has already march'd, and by this time, no doubt, has come to blows with the enemy. The levy is still proceeding. All the Decemvirs, but Appius, take the field. He remains in Rome to keep good order, that is the violater of all order. Why, where have you been, to have felt no movement of so great and wide a stir? Your brother meets Virginius at his house to-day. — Come with me thither, for you, I know, are bid. — Lucius, there's no huzzaing for your Decemvirs now. — Come on, we have outstaid the hour. [*Exeunt*]

Scene Second. — Virginius's *House*.

[*Enter* Virginius, Icilius, Lucius, *and others*]

Virginius. Welcome, Icilius! Welcome, friends! Icilius,
I did design to speak with you of feasting
And merriment, but war is now the word;
One that unlovingly keeps time with mirth,
Unless war's own — whene'er the battle's won,
And safe carousing, comrades drink to victory!

Icilius. Virginius! have you chang'd your mind?

Virginius. My mind?
What mind? How now! Are you that boy, Icilius?
You set your heart so earnestly upon
A dish of poor confections, that to balk you
Makes you look blank! I did design to feast you
Together with your friends — The times are chang'd —
The march, the tent, the fight becomes us now!

Icilius. Virginius!

Virginius. Well?

Icilius. Virginius!

Virginius. How the boy
Reiterates my name!

Icilius. There's not a hope
I have, but is the client of Virginius.

Virginius. Well, well! I only meant to put it off;
We'll have the revel yet! the board shall smoke!
The cup shall sparkle, and the jest shall soar
And mock us from the roof! Will that content you?
Not till the war be done, tho' — Yet, ere then,
Some tongue, that now needs only wag, to make
The table ring, may have a tale to tell
So petrifying, that it cannot utter it!
I'll make all sure, that you may be my guest
At any rate — although you should be forc'd
To play the host for me, and feast yourself.
Look here,
[*Shows a parchment to* Icilius]
How think you? Will it meet the charge?
Will it not do? We want a witness, tho'!
I'll bring one; whom, if you approve, I'll sign
The bond. I'll wait upon you instantly. [*Exit*]

LUCIUS. How feel you now, Icilius?
ICILIUS. Like a man
Whom the next moment makes, or quite unmakes.
With the intensity of exquisite
Suspense, my breathing thickens, and my heart
Beats heavily, and with remittent throb,
As like to lose its action. — See! my hope
Is bless'd! I live! I live!

[*Enter* VIRGINIUS, *conducting* VIRGINIA, *with* NUMITORIUS]

VIRGINIUS [*holding his daughter's hand*]. You are my witnesses,
That this young creature I present to you,
I do pronounce — my profitably cherish'd,
And most deservedly belovèd child;
My daughter, truly filial — both in word
And act — yet even more in act than word:
And — for the man who seeks to win her love, —
A virgin, from whose lips a soul as pure
Exhales, as ere responded to the blessing
Breath'd in a parent's kiss. [*Kisses her*] Icilius!

[ICILIUS *rushes towards* VIRGINIUS, *and kneels*]

Since
You are upon your knees, young man, look up;
And lift your hands to heaven — You will be all
Her father has been — added unto all
A lover would be!
ICILIUS. All that man should be
To woman, I will be to her!
VIRGINIUS. The oath
Is register'd! Didst thou but know, young man,
How fondly I have watch'd her, since the day
Her mother died, and left me to a charge
Of double duty bound — how she hath been
My ponder'd thought, by day, my dream, by night!
My prayer, my vow, "my offering, my praise,"
My sweet companion, pupil, tutor, child! —
Thou would'st not wonder, that my drowning eye,
And choking utterance, upbraid my tongue,
That tells thee, she is thine! — Icilius,
I do betroth her to thee; let but the war
Be done — you shall espouse her. Friends, a word!

[VIRGINIUS *and the rest retire*]

ICILIUS. Virginia! my Virginia! I am all
Dissolv'd — o'erpower'd with the munificence
Of this auspicious hour — And thou, nor mov'st,
Nor look'st — nor speak'st — to bless me with a sign
Of sweet according joy! I love thee, but
To make thee happy! If to make thee so
Be bliss denied to me — lo, I release
The gifted hand that I would faster hold,
Than wretches, bound for death, would cling to life —
If thou would'st take it back — then take it back.
VIRGINIA. I take it back — to give it thee again!
ICILIUS. Oh, help me to a word will speak my bliss,
Or I am beggar'd — No! there is not one!
There cannot be; for never man had bliss
Like mine to name.
VIRGINIA. "Thou dost but beggar me,
"Icilius, when thou mak'st thyself a bankrupt;
"Placing a value on me far above
"My real little worth." — I'd help thee to
A hundred words; each one of which would far
O'er-rate thy gain, and yet no single one
Rate over high!
ICILIUS. Thou could'st not do it! No;
Thou could'st not do it! Every term of worth
Writ down and doubl'd, then the whole sum'd up,
Would leave with thee a rich remainder still! —
Pick from each rarer pattern of thy sex
Her rarest charm, till thou hast every charm
Of soul and body, that can blend in woman,
I would out-paragon the paragon
With thee!

"VIRGINIA. And if thou would'st, I'd find thee, for
"Thy paragon, a mate — if that can be
"A mate, which doth transcend the thing 'tis ta'en
"To match — would make thy paragon look poor,
"And I would call that so o'ermatching mate
"Icilius.
"ICILIUS. No! I will not let thee win
"On such a theme as this!
"VIRGINIA. Nor will I drop
"The controversy, that the richer makes me,
"The more I lose.
"ICILIUS. My sweet Virginia,
"We do but lose and lose, and win and win;
"Playing for nothing but to lose and win."
Then let us stop the game — and thus I stop it. [*Kisses her*]

[*Re-enter* VIRGINIUS *and the others*]

VIRGINIUS. Witness, my friends, that seal! Observe, it is
A living one! It is Icilius' seal;
And stamp'd upon as true and fair a bond —
Tho' it receive the impress blushingly —
As ever signet kiss'd! Are all content?
Speak, else! She is thy free affianc'd wife,
Thou art her free affianc'd husband! Come,
We have o'erdrawn our time — Farewell, Virginia;
Thy future husband for a time must be
Bellona's. To thy tasks again, my child;
Be thou the bride of study for a time.
Farewell!
VIRGINIA. My father!
VIRGINIUS. May the gods protect thee.
VIRGINIA. My father!
VIRGINIUS. Does the blood forsake thy cheek?
Come to my arms once more! Remember, girl,
The first and foremost debt a Roman owes,
Is to his country; and it must be paid,
If need be, with his life. — Why, how you hold me!
Icilius, take her from me! Hoa! Within!
Within, there! Servia!

[*Enter* SERVIA]

Look to your child!
Come, boy.
ICILIUS. Farewell, Virginia.
VIRGINIUS. Take her in!
VIRGINIA. The gods be with thee, my Icilius! — Father,
The gods be with thee — and Icilius!
VIRGINIUS. I swear, a battle might be fought and won
In half the time! Now, once for all, farewell;
Your sword and buckler, boy! The foe! the foe!
Does he not tread on Roman ground? Come on!
Come on, charge on him! drive him back! or die! [*Exeunt*]

SCENE THIRD. — APPIUS'S *House.*

[*Enter* APPIUS]

APPIUS. It was a triumph; the achieving which,
O'erpaid the risk was run — and that was great.
They have made trial of their strength, and learn'd
Its value from defeat. The Senate knows
Its masters now; and the Decemvirate,
To make its reign eternal, only wants
Its own decree, which little pains will win.
Ere this, the foe has, for his mad invasion,
Been paid with chastisement. "Retir'd within
"His proper limits, leisure waits upon us
"To help us to the recompence, decreed
"To our noble daring, who have set ourselves
"In such high seats, as at our feet array
"The wealth, and power, and dignity of Rome
"In absolute subjection! Tyranny!
"How godlike is thy port! Thou giv'st, and tak'st,
"And ask'st no other leave, than what thy own
"Imperial will accords. — Jove does no more!"
Now, Claudius —

[*Enter* CLAUDIUS]

CLAUDIUS. We have suffer'd a defeat!
APPIUS. What! The Decemvirs fly!

CLAUDIUS. The soldiers fight
With only half a heart. "The other half
"Looks on, and cares not which side proves the winner."

APPIUS. Then decimate them. Traitors! Recreants!
Why, we shall have them at our very doors!
Have we lost ground, my Claudius?

CLAUDIUS. None, except
What we've retrac'd in fame. We strove to teach
The enemy their road lay backwards, but
They would not turn their faces for us. Each
Retains his former line.

[*Enter* MARCUS]

APPIUS. What news?

MARCUS. The Œqui
Still press upon us. Rumours are afloat
Of new disasters, which the common cry,
Be sure, still multiplies and swells. Dentatus,
That over-busy, crabbèd veteran,
Walks up and down among the people making
Your plans his theme of laughter. Naught he stints
That may reflect you in an odious light,
And lower the Decemvirate.

APPIUS. A dungeon
Would do good service to him! Once within,
Strangling were easy! We must stop his mouth —
"Unwholesome food — or liquor" — Where was he
When last you heard him?

MARCUS. In the Forum.

APPIUS. So!
He is past service, is he not? Some way
To clear the city of him. Come, we'll hear him,
And answer him, and silence him! 'Tis well
The dog barks forth his spleen; it puts us on
Our guard against his bite. Come, to the Forum! [*Exeunt*]

SCENE FOURTH. — *The Forum.*

[*Enter* DENTATUS, TITUS, SERVIUS, *and* CITIZENS]

TITUS. What's to be done?

DENTATUS. We'll be undone — that's to be done.

SERVIUS. We'll do away with the Decemvirate.

DENTATUS. You'll do away with the Decemvirate? — The Decemvirate will do away with you! You'll do away with yourselves! Do nothing. — The enemy will do away with both of you. In another month, a Roman will be a stranger in Rome. A fine pass we are come to, Masters!

TITUS. But something must be done.

DENTATUS. Why, what would you have? You shout and clap your hands, as if it were a victory you heard of; and yet you cry — Something must be done! Truly, I know not what that something is, unless it be to make you General. How say you, Masters?

SERVIUS. We'd follow any man that knew how to lead us, and would rid us of our foes, and the Decemvirate together.

DENTATUS. You made these Decemvirs! You are strangely discontented with your own work! And you are overcunning workmen, too. — You put your materials so firmly together, there's no such thing as taking them asunder! What you build, you build — except it be for your own good. — There you are bunglers at your craft. Ha! ha! ha! I cannot but laugh to think how you toiled, and strained, and sweated, to rear the stones of the building one above another, when I see the sorry faces you make at it!

TITUS. But tell us the news again.

DENTATUS. Is it so good? Does it so please you? Then prick your ears again, and listen. — We have been beaten again — beaten back on our own soil. Rome has seen its haughty masters fly before chastisement, like slaves — returning cries for blows — and all this of your Decemvirs, gentlemen.

1ST CITIZEN. Huzza for it again!

[*The* PEOPLE *shout*]

2D CITIZEN. Hush! Appius comes.

DENTATUS. And do you care for that? You that were, just now, within a stride of taking him and his colleagues by the throat? You'll do away with the Decemvirs, will you? And let but one of them appear, you dare not, for your life, but keep your spleen within your teeth! Listen to me, now! I'll speak the more for Appius —

[*Enter* APPIUS, CLAUDIUS, *and* MARCUS, *preceded by* LICTORS]

I say, to the eternal infamy of Rome, the foe has chased her sons, like hares, on their own soil, where they should prey like lions — and so they would, had they not keepers to tame them.

APPIUS. What's that you are saying to the people, Sicinius Dentatus?

DENTATUS. I am regaling them with the news.

APPIUS. The news?

DENTATUS. Ay, the news — the newest that can be had; and the more novel, because unlooked for. Who ever thought to see the eagle in the talons of the kite?

APPIUS. It is not well done in you, Dentatus, to chafe a sore. It makes it rankle. If your surgery has learned no better, it should keep its hands to itself! You have very little to do, to busy yourself after this fashion.

DENTATUS. I busy myself as I like, Appius Claudius.

APPIUS. I know you do, when you labour to spread disaffection among the people, and bring the Decemvirs into contempt.

DENTATUS. The Decemvirs bring themselves into contempt.

APPIUS. Ha! dare you say so?

DENTATUS [*closer to him*]. Dare! I have dared cry, "Come on!" to a cohort of bearded warriors — Is it thy smooth face should appal me? Dare! it never yet flurried me to use my arm — Shall I not, think you, be at my ease, when I but wag my tongue? Dare, indeed!

[*Laughs contemptuously*]

APPIUS. Your grey hairs should keep company with honester speech!

DENTATUS. Shall I show you, Appius, the company they are wont to keep? Look here! and here! [*Uncovering his forehead, and showing scars*] These are the vouchers of honest deeds — such is the speech with which my grey hairs keep company. I tell you to your teeth, the Decemvirs bring themselves into contempt.

APPIUS. What, are they not serving their country at the head of her armies?

DENTATUS. They'd serve her better in the body of her armies! I'd name for thee a hundred centurions would make better generals. A common soldier of a year's active service would take his measures better. Generals! Our generals were wont to teach us how to win battles. — Tactics are changed — Your generals instruct us how to lose them.

APPIUS. Do you see my lictors?

DENTATUS. There are twelve of them.

APPIUS. What, if I bid them seize thee?

DENTATUS. They'd blush to do it.

APPIUS. Why now, Dentatus, I begin to know you;
I fancied you a man that lov'd to vent
His causeless anger in an under breath,
And speak it in the ear — and only then
When there was safety! Such a one, you'll own,
Is dangerous; and, to be trusted as
A friend or foe, unworthy. But I see
You rail to faces. — Have you not so much
Respect for Appius, as to take him by
The hand; when he confesses you have some
Pretence to quarrel with his colleagues' plans,
And find fault with himself? Which, yet you'll own,
May quite as well be kindly done, Dentatus,
As harshly. — Had you only to myself
Declar'd your discontents, the more you had rail'd
The more I should have thank'd you.

DENTATUS. Had I thought —

APPIUS. And have you been campaigning then so long,
And prosperously? and mistrust you, Sicinius,
That a young scarless soldier, like myself,
Would listen to your tutoring? See, now,
How much you have mistaken me! Dentatus,
In a word — Can you assist the generals?
And will you?

DENTATUS. I have all the will, — but as
For the ability —

APPIUS. Tut! tut! Dentatus,
You vex me now! This coyness sits not well on you.
You know, as well as I, you have as much
Ability as will. I would not think you
A man that lov'd to find fault, but to find fault!
Surely, the evil you complain of, you
Would lend a hand to remedy! See, now,

'Tis fairly put to you — what say you?
DENTATUS. Appius!
You may use me as you please!
APPIUS. And that will be,
As you deserve! I'll send you, as my Legate,
To the army. [*Shout from the* PEOPLE] Do you hear your friends, Dentatus?
A lucky omen, that! Away! away!
Apprise your house — prepare for setting out.
I'll hurry your credentials. — Minutes, now,
Rate high as hours! Assist my colleagues with
Your counsel; — if their plans displease you, why
Correct them! change them! utterly reject them!
And if you meet obstruction — notice me,
And I will push it by. — There now! Your hand! —
Again! Away! All the success attend you,
That Appius wishes you!
DENTATUS. Success is from
The gods, whose hand soe'er it pleases them
To send it by. — I know not what success
'Tis Appius' wish they send; — but this I know, —
I am a soldier; and, as a soldier, I
Am bound to serve. All the success I ask,
Is that which benefits my country, Appius. [*Exit* DENTATUS]
APPIUS. [*Aside*] You have serv'd her overlong! —
Now for our causes. [*Ascends Tribunal*]
CLAUDIUS. [*To* MARCUS] Do you see the drift of this?
MARCUS. I cannot guess it.
CLAUDIUS. Nor I.
APPIUS. [*To a* PLEBEIAN] Are you the suitor in this cause?
Speak!
PLEBEIAN. Noble Appius, if there's law in Rome
To right a man most injur'd, to that law
Against yon proud Patrician I appeal.
APPIUS. No more of that, I say! Because he's rich
And great, you call him proud! 'Tis not unlike,
Because you're poor and mean, you call yourself
Injur'd. — Relate your story; and, so please you,
Spare epithets!
PLEBEIAN. Grant me a minute's pause,
I shall begin.

[VIRGINIA *at this moment crosses the Stage with her* NURSE, *and is met by* NUMITORIUS, *who holds her in conversation;* APPIUS *rivets his eyes upon her*]

NUMITORIUS. You have heard the news?
VIRGINIA. What news? dear uncle!
NUMITORIUS. Step
Aside with me, I'll tell you.

[*Takes her a little farther from the Tribunal*]

APPIUS. Can it be
A mortal that I look upon?
VIRGINIA. They are safe!
I thank the gods!
APPIUS. Her eyes look up to heaven,
Like something kindred to it — rather made
To send their glances down, and fill the earth
With worship and with gratulation — What
A thrill runs up and down my veins; and all throughout me!
PLEBEIAN. Now, most noble Appius! —
APPIUS. Stop;
Put off the cause, I cannot hear it now!
Attend to-morrow! An oppressive closeness
Allows me not to breathe — Lictors! make clear
The ground about the Rostrum!

[*Descends and approaches* CLAUDIUS *with precipitation*]

Claudius! Claudius! —
Marcus, go you and summon my physician
To be at home before me. [*Exit* MARCUS] Claudius!
Claudius! there! there!
VIRGINIA. You send a messenger to-night?
APPIUS. Paint me that smile! I never saw a smile
Till now. My Claudius, is she not a wonder?
I know not whether in the state of girlhood
Or womanhood to call her. — 'Twixt the two
She stands, as that were loth to lose her. this

To win her most impatient. The young year,
Trembling and blushing 'midst the striving kisses
Of parting spring, and meeting summer, seems
Her only parallel!

NUMITORIUS. 'Tis well! I'll send
Your father word of this. But have you not
A message to Icilius?

APPIUS. Mark you, Claudius?
There is a blush! — I must possess her.

VIRGINIA. Tell him
I think upon him. — Farewell, Numitorius! [*Exit with* SERVIA]

NUMITORIUS. Farewell, Virginia.

CLAUDIUS. Master, will you tell me
The name of that young maiden?

NUMITORIUS. She is called
Virginia, daughter of Virginius;
A Roman citizen, and a centurion
In the army.

CLAUDIUS. Thank you; she is very like
The daughter of a friend of mine. Farewell.

NUMITORIUS. Farewell! [*Exit*]

APPIUS. I burn, my Claudius! brain and heart — There's not
A fibre in my body but's on fire!
With what a gait she moves! Such was not Hebe,
Or Jupiter had sooner lost his heaven,
Than changed his cup-bearer — a step like that
The rapture glowing clouds might well bear up,
And never take for human! Find me, Claudius,
Some way to compass the possession of her.

CLAUDIUS. 'Tis difficult. — Her father's of repute;
The highest of his class.

APPIUS. I guessed it! Friends
Are ever friends, except when friends are needed.

CLAUDIUS. Nay, Appius! —

APPIUS. If thou can'st not give me hope,
Be dumb!

CLAUDIUS. A female agent may be used
With some success.

APPIUS. How? How?

CLAUDIUS. To tamper with
That woman that attends her.

APPIUS. Set about it.

CLAUDIUS. Could she but be induc'd to help you to
A single meeting with her.

APPIUS. Claudius! Claudius!
Effect but that!

CLAUDIUS. I'll instantly about it.

APPIUS. Spare not my gold — nor stop at promises.
I will fulfil them fast as thou can'st make them.
To purchase such a draught of extacy
I'd drain a kingdom! — Set about it, Claudius!
Away! I will not eat, nor drink, nor sleep,
Until I hear from thee!

CLAUDIUS. Depend upon me!

APPIUS. I do, my Claudius, for my life — my life!

[*Exeunt severally*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT

ACT III

SCENE FIRST. — APPIUS'S *House*.

[*Enter* APPIUS]

APPIUS. It is not love, if what I've felt before
And call'd by such a name, be love — a thing
That took its turn — that I could entertain,
Put off, or humour — 'tis some other thing;
Or, if the same, why in some other state —
Or I am not the same — or it hath found
Some other part of sensibility
More quick, whereon to try its power, and there
Expends it all! Now, Claudius, your success?

[*Enter* CLAUDIUS]

CLAUDIUS. Nothing would do, yet nothing left undone!
She was not to be purchas'd.

APPIUS. Did she guess —

CLAUDIUS. She could not,
So guarded was my agent; who describ'd you
A man of power, of noble family,
And regal fortune — one that ask'd not what
His pleasures cost — no further made disclosure.

APPIUS. And did it nothing move her, Claudius?

CLAUDIUS. Nothing.
The more my agent urg'd, the more the shrunk
And wither'd hag grew callous; further press'd,
And with more urgent importuning, ire
And scorn, in imprecations and invectives
Vented upon the monster (as she call'd him)
That would pollute her child, compell'd my advocate
To drop the suit she saw was hopeless.
APPIUS. Now
Had I a friend indeed!
CLAUDIUS. Has Appius need
To search for such a friend, and Claudius by him?
APPIUS. Friends ever are provisionally friends —
Friends for so far — Friends just to such a point,
And then "farewell!" friends with an understanding —
As should the road be pretty safe — the sea
Not over-rough, and so on — friends of *ifs*
And *buts* — no friends! — Oh, could I find the man
Would be a simple, thorough-going friend!
CLAUDIUS. I thought you had one, Appius.
APPIUS. So thought Appius,
Till Appius thought upon a test of friendship,
He fears he would not give unto himself,
Could he be Appius' friend.
CLAUDIUS. Then Appius has
A truer friend than Appius is to Appius.
I'll give that test!
APPIUS. What! you'd remove her father
And that Icilius whom you told me of?
CLAUDIUS. Count it as done.
APPIUS. My Claudius, is it true?
Can I believe it? art thou such a friend,
That, when I look'd for thee to stop and leave me,
I find thee keeping with me, step by step;
And even in thy loving eagerness
Outstriding me? I do not want thee, Claudius,
To soil thy hand with their plebeian blood.
CLAUDIUS. What would'st thou, then?
APPIUS. I was left guardian to thee —
CLAUDIUS. Thou wast.
APPIUS. Amongst the various property
Thy father left, were many female slaves.
CLAUDIUS. Well?
APPIUS. It were easy for thee, (were it not?)
To forge a tale that one of them confess'd
She had sold a female infant (and of course
Thy slave) unto Virginius' wife, who pass'd it
Upon Virginius as his daughter, which
Supposititious offspring is this same
Virginia?
CLAUDIUS. I conceive you.
APPIUS. To induce
The woman to confirm your tale, would ask
But small persuasion. Is it done?
CLAUDIUS. This hour.
I know the school, my Appius, where Virginia
Pursues her studies; thither I'll repair
And seize her as my slave at once. Do thou
Repair to thy tribunal, whither, should
Her friends molest me in the attempt, I'll bring her,
And plead my cause before thee.
APPIUS. Claudius! Claudius!
How shall I pay thee? Oh, thou noble friend!
Power, fortune, life, whate'er belongs to Appius,
Reckon as thine! Away, away, my Claudius! [*Exeunt severally*]

SCENE SECOND. — *A Street in Rome.*

[*Enter* LUCIUS, *meeting* TITUS, SERVIUS, *and* CNEIUS]

LUCIUS. Well, Masters, any news of Sicinius Dentatus from the camp, how he was received by the Decemvirs?

TITUS. He was received well by the Decemvirs.

CNEIUS. It wasn't then for the love they bear him.

TITUS. But they expect he'll help them to return the cuffs they have gotten from the enemy.

SERVIUS. Do you wish for a victory?

LUCIUS. Yes, if Dentatus wins it. 'Tis to our credit, Masters — He's one of us.

SERVIUS. And is not Spurius Oppius one of us?

LUCIUS. He is; but he is in league with the Patricians — "that is, the patrician Decemvirs." He is but half a Plebeian, and that is the worse half. — "The better half he threw away when he became half a Patrician." I never lik'd your half-and-half gentry; they generally combine the bad of both kinds, without the good of either.

SERVIUS. Well, we shall have news presently. Icilius, our late tribune, has just arrived with despatches from the camp. I met him passing through the Forum, and asked him what news he brought? He answered, none; but added, we might look for news of another kind than what we had been lately accustomed to hear.

[*A shriek without*]

CNEIUS. What's that?

TITUS. Look yonder, Masters! See!

SERVIUS. 'Tis Appius's client, dragging a young woman along with him.

TITUS. Let us stand by each other, Masters, and prevent him.

[*Enter* CLAUDIUS, *dragging along* VIRGINIA, *followed by* SERVIA, *and others*]

SERVIA. Help! help! help!

LUCIUS. Let go your hold!

CLAUDIUS. Stand by!
She is my slave!

SERVIA. His slave! Help! help! His slave? —
He looks more like a slave than she! Good Masters!
Protect the daughter of Virginius!

LUCIUS. Release the maid.

TITUS. Forbear this violence.

CLAUDIUS. I call for the assistance of the laws;
She is my slave.

SERVIA. She is my daughter, Masters,
My foster-daughter; and her mother was
A free-born woman — and her father is
A citizen, a Roman — good Virginius,
As I said before — Virginius, the Centurion,
Whom all of you must know. — Help! help! I say,
You see she cannot speak to help herself;
Speak for her, Masters — help her, if you're men!

TITUS. Let go your hold.

CLAUDIUS. Obstruct me at your peril.

LUCIUS. We'll make you, if you will not.

CLAUDIUS. Let me pass.

SERVIUS. Let go your hold, once more.

CLAUDIUS. Good Masters! patience! —
Hear me, I say — She is my slave — I wish not
To use this violence, my friends; but may not
A master seize upon his slave? — Make way,
Or such of you as are dissatisfied,
Repair with me to the Decemvir. — Come,
I only want my right.

TITUS. Come on, then!

SERVIUS. Ay,
To the Decemvir!

SERVIA. Run, run for Numitorius — alarm our neighbours! — Call out Icilius's friends! — I shall go mad! Help! help! help! [*Exeunt*]

SCENE THIRD. — *The Forum.*

[*Enter* APPIUS, *preceded by* LICTORS]

APPIUS. Will he succeed? — Will he attempt it? — Will he
Go through with it? — [*Looks out*] No sign — I almost wish
He had not undertaken it; yet wish
More than I wish for life, he may accomplish
What he has undertaken. Oh! the pause
That precedes action! It is vacancy
That o'erweighs action's substance. What I fear
Is, that his courage can't withstand her tears;
That will be sure to try and succour her.
Pointing, as 'twere, to every charm, and pleading
With melting eloquence. I hear a sound
As of approaching clamour — and the rush
Of distant feet — He comes! I must prepare
For his reception.

[*Ascends the Tribunal*]

[CLAUDIUS *enters, still holding* VIRGINIA, *followed by* SERVIA, WOMEN, *and* CITIZENS]

CLAUDIUS. Do not press upon me;
Here's the Decemvir — he will satisfy you,

Whether a master has a right or not
To seize his slave when he finds her.

SERVIA. She is no slave
Of thine! She never was a slave! Thou slave!
To call her by that name — Ay! threaten me!
She is a free-born maid, and not a slave,
Or never was a free-born maid in Rome!
Oh! you shall dearly answer for it!

APPIUS. Peace!
What quarrel's this? Speak, those who are aggriev'd.

[*Enter* NUMITORIUS]

NUMITORIUS. Where is Virginia? Wherefore do you hold
That maiden's hand?

CLAUDIUS. Who asks the question?

NUMITORIUS. I! Her uncle Numitorius!

CLAUDIUS. Numitorius, you think yourself her uncle — Numitorius,
No blood of yours flows in her veins, to give you
The title you would claim. Most noble Appius!
If you sit here for justice — as I think
You do, attend not to the clamour of
This man, who calls himself this damsel's *uncle.*
She is my property — was born beneath
My father's roof, whose slave her mother was,
Who (as I can establish past dispute)
Sold her an infant to Virginius' wife,
Who never had a child, and heavily
Revolv'd her barrenness. My slave I have found
And seiz'd — as who that finds his own (no matter
How long so ever miss'd) should fear to take it?
If they oppose my claim, they may produce
Their counter-proofs, and bring the cause to trial!
But till they prove mine own is not mine own —
(An undertaking somewhat perilous)
Mine own I shall retain — yet giving them,
Should they demand it, what security
They please, for re-producing her.

APPIUS. Why, that
Would be but reasonable.

NUMITORIUS. Reasonable!
Claudius! —

[*With much vehemence — recollects himself*]

He's but a mask upon the face
Of some more powerful contriver. — [*Aside*] Appius,
My niece's father is from Rome, thou know'st,
Serving his country. Is it not unjust,
In the absence of a citizen, to suffer
His right to his own child to be disputed?
Grant us a day to fetch Virginius,
That he himself may answer this most foul
And novel suit — Meanwhile to me belongs
The custody of the maid — her uncle's house
Can better answer for her honour than
The house of Claudius. 'Tis the law of Rome,
Before a final sentence, the defendant
In his possession is not to sustain
Disturbance from the plaintiff.

TITUS. A just law.

SERVIUS. And a most reasonable demand.

ALL THE CITIZENS. Ay! Ay! Ay!

APPIUS. Silence, you Citizens; will you restrain
Your tongues, and give your magistrate permission
To speak? The law is just — most reasonable —
I fram'd that law myself — I will protect
That law!

"TITUS. Most noble Appius!

"SERVIUS. A most just decree!

"ALL THE CITIZENS. Ay! Ay!

"APPIUS. Will you be silent? Will you please to wait
"For my decree, you most untractable
"And boisterous citizens! I do repeat it,"
I framed that law myself, and will protect it.
But are you, Numitorius, here defendant?
That title, none but the reputed father
Of the young woman has a right to — How
Can I commit to thee what may appear
The plaintiff's property; and, if not his,
Still is not thine? I'll give thee till to-morrow
Ere I pass a final judgment — But the girl
Remains with Claudius, who shall bind himself
In such security as you require,
To re-produce her at the claim of him
Who calls her daughter. This is my decree.

NUMITORIUS. A foul decree. — Shame! shame!
SERVIUS. Aye, a most foul decree.
CNEIUS. A villainous decree.
SERVIUS. Most villainous.
SERVIA. Good Citizens, what do you with our weapons,
When you should use your own? Your hands! — your hands! —
He shall not take her from us.
Gather round her,
And if he touch her, be it to his cost;
And if ye see him touch her, never more
Expect from us your titles — never more
Be husbands, brothers, lovers, at our mouths,
Or any thing that doth imply the name
Of men — except such men as men should blush for.
APPIUS. Command your wives and daughters, Citizens,
They quit the Forum.
SERVIA. They shall not command us,
That care not to protect us.
APPIUS. Take the girl,
If she is yours.
CLAUDIUS. Stand by.
VIRGINIA. Oh, help me! help me!

[*Enter* ICILIUS]

ICILIUS. Virginia's voice! Virginia! [*Rushes to her*]
VIRGINIA. Oh, Icilius! [*Falls fainting in his arms*]
ICILIUS. Take her, good Numitorius.
APPIUS. You had better
Withdraw, Icilius; the affair is judged.
CLAUDIUS. I claim my slave.
ICILIUS. Stand back, thou double slave!
Touch her, and I will tear thee, limb from limb,
Before thy master's face. — She is my wife,
My life, my heart, my heart's blood. — Touch her
With but a look —
APPIUS. My Lictors, there, advance!
See that Icilius quits the Forum. — Claudius,
Secure your slave.
ICILIUS. Lictors, a moment pause,
For your own sakes. Do not mistake these arms;
Think not the strength of any common man
Is that they feel. They serve a charmèd frame,
The which a power pervades, that ten times trebles
The natural energy of each single nerve,
To sweep you down as reeds.
APPIUS. Obey my orders!
ICILIUS. Appius! before I quit the Forum, let me
Address a word to you.
APPIUS. Be brief, then!
ICILIUS. Is't not enough you have depriv'd us, Appius,
Of the two strongest bulwarks to our liberties,
Our tribunes, and our privilege of appeal
To the assembly of the people? Cannot
The honour of the Roman maids be safe?
Thou know'st this virgin is betroth'd to me,
Wife of my hope — Thou shalt not cross my hope,
And I retain my life — attempt it not! —
I stand among my fellow-citizens,
His fellow-soldiers hem Virginius round,
Both men and gods are on our side; but grant
I stood alone, with nought but virtuous love
To hearten me — alone would I defeat
The execution of thy infamous
Decree! I'll quit the Forum now, but not
Alone — my love! — my wife! my free-born maid —
The virgin standard of my pride and manhood,
"Of peerless motto! — rich, and fresh, and shining,
"And of device most rare and glorious" —
I'll bear off safe with me — unstain'd — untouch'd!
APPIUS. Your duty, Lictors! — Claudius, look to your right.
ICILIUS. True citizens!
TITUS. Down with the traitor!
SERVIUS. Down with him — slay him!

[*The* LICTORS *and* CLAUDIUS *are driven back;* CLAUDIUS *takes refuge at* APPIUS'S *feet, who has descended, and throws up his arms as a signal to both parties to desist — whereupon the people retire a little*]

APPIUS. So, friends! we thank you that you don't deprive us
Of every thing; but leave your magistrates,
At least their persons, sacred — their decrees,

It seems, you value as you value straws,
And in like manner break them. Wherefore stop,
When you have gone so far? You might, methinks,
As well have kill'd my client at my feet,
As threaten him with death before my face!
Rise, Claudius! I perceive Icilius' aim; —
He labours to restore the tribuneship
By means of a sedition. We'll not give him
The least pretence of quarrel. We shall wait
Virginius's arrival till to-morrow.
His friends take care to notice him — The camp's
But four hours' journey from the city. Till
To-morrow, then, let me prevail with you
To yield up something of your right, and let
The girl remain at liberty.

CLAUDIUS. If they
Produce security for her appearance,
I am content.

TITUS. I'll be your security.

SERVIUS. And I.

CITIZENS. We'll all be your security.

[*They hold up their hands*]

ICILIUS. My friends,
And fellow-citizens, I thank you; but
Reserve your kindness for to-morrow, friends,
If Claudius still persist — To-day, I hope,
He will remain content with my security,
And that of Numitorius, for the maid's
Appearance.

APPIUS. See she do appear! — and come
Prepar'd to pay the laws more reverence,
As I shall surely see that they receive it.

[*Exeunt* APPIUS, CLAUDIUS, *and* LICTORS]

ICILIUS. Look up! look up! my sweet Virginia,
Look up! look up! you will see none but friends.
Oh, that such eyes should e'er meet other prospects!

VIRGINIA. Icilius! Uncle! lead me home! Icilius,
You did not think to take a slave to wife! —

ICILIUS. I thought, and think to wed a free-born maid;
And thou, and thou alone, art she, Virginia!

VIRGINIA. I feel as I were so — I do not think
I am his slave! Virginius not my father!
Virginius, my dear father, not my father!
It cannot be; my life must come from him;
For, make him not my father, it will go
From me. — I could not live, an he were not
My father.

ICILIUS. Dear Virginia, calm thy thoughts —
But who shall warn Virginius?

NUMITORIUS. I've ta'en care
Of that; no sooner heard I of this claim,
Than I despatch'd thy brother Lucius,
Together with my son, to bring Virginius,
With all the speed they could; and caution'd them
(As he is something over quick of temper,
And might snatch justice, rather than sue for it,)
To evade communication of the cause,
And merely say his presence was required,
Till we should have him with us. Come, Virginia;
Thy uncle's house shall guard thee, till thou find'st
Within thy father's arms a citadel,
Whence Claudius cannot take thee.

ICILIUS. He shall take
A thousand lives first.

TITUS. Ay, ten thousand lives.

ICILIUS. Hear you, Virginia! Do you hear your friends?

VIRGINIA. Let him take my life first, I am content
To be his slave then — if I am his slave.

ICILIUS. Thou art a free-born Roman maid, Virginia;
All Rome doth know thee so, Virginia —
All Rome will see thee so.

CITIZENS. We will! we will!

ICILIUS. You'll meet us here to-morrow?

CITIZENS. All! all!

ICILIUS. Cease not to clamour 'gainst this outrage. Tell it
In every corner of the city; and
Let no man call himself a son of Rome,
Who stands aloof when tyranny assails
Her fairest daughter. Come, Virginia,
'Tis not a private, but a common wrong;

'Tis every father's, lover's, freeman's cause;
To-morrow! fellow citizens, to-morrow!

CITIZENS. To-morrow!

[*Exeunt severally*]

SCENE FOURTH. — *The Camp.*

[*Enter* S. OPPIUS *and* Q. F. VIBULANUS]

OPPIUS. Has he set out?

VIBULANUS. He has, my Oppius,
And never to return! His guard's instructed
To take good care of him. There's not a man
But's ten times sold to us, and of our wishes
Fully possess'd. Dentatus will no more
Obstruct us in our plans. He did not like
The site of our encampment. He will find
At least the air of it was wholesome.

OPPIUS. What
Report are they instructed to bring back?

VIBULANUS. They fell into an ambush. — He was slain.

OPPIUS. But should the truth, by any means, come out.

VIBULANUS. Imprison them, and secretly despatch them,
Or ope the dungeon doors, and let them 'scape.

OPPIUS. I should prefer the latter method.

VIBULANUS. Well,
That be our choice. But when it is determined
To spill blood otherwise than as it may
Be spill'd, to hesitate about some drops
Is weakness, may be fatal. — Come, my friend,
Let us be seen about the camp, and ready,
With most admiring ear, to catch the tidings,
Will be the wonder of all ears but ours.
Here's one anticipates us!

[*Enter* MARCUS]

Well, your news?

MARCUS. Dentatus is no more! but he has dearly sold his life. The matter has been reported as you directed. By few it is received with credence — by many with doubt; while some bold spirits stop not at muttering, but loudly speak suspicion of foul play. A party that we met, a mile beyond the lines, no sooner heard our story, than they set off to bring the body to the camp. Others have followed them. Fabius, we have your gage for safety.

VIBULANUS. You have. — Come, let us show ourselves. — Guilt hides,
And we must wear the port of innocence,
That more than half way meets accusal.
— Come. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE FIFTH. — *A Mountainous Pass. — The body of* DENTATUS *discovered on a bier.—Soldiers mourning over it. Trumpets*]

[*Enter* VIRGINIUS *and* SOLDIERS]

VIRGINIUS. Where is Dentatus? Where is the gallant soldier?
Ah, Comrade! Comrade! warm! yet warm! So lately
Gone, when I would have given the world, only
To say farewell to thee, or even get
A parting look! O gallant, gallant soldier,
The god of war might sure have spar'd a head
Grown grey in serving him! My brave old comrade!
The father of the field! Thy silver locks
Other anointing should receive, than what
Their masters' blood could furnish!

1ST SOLDIER. There has been treachery here!

VIRGINIUS. What!

1ST SOLDIER. The slain are all our own. None of the bodies are stripp'd — These are all Romans. There is not the slightest trace of an enemy's retreat — And now I remember, they made a sudden halt when we came in sight of them at the foot of the mountain. — Mark'd you not, too, with what confused haste they told their story, directed us, and hurried on to the camp?

VIRGINIUS. Revenge! The Decemvirs! Aye, the Decemvirs!
For every drop of blood thou shalt have ten,
Dentatus!

LUCIUS. What, hoa! Virginius! Virginius!

VIRGINIUS. Here! here!

[*Enter* LUCIUS]

LUCIUS. 'Tis well you're found, Virginius!

VIRGINIUS. What makes you from the city? Look!
My Lucius, what a sight you've come to witness.
My brave old comrade! Honest Sicinius!
"Sicinius Dentatus, that true son of Rome,
"On whose white locks the mother look'd more proudly
"Than on the raven ones of her youngest and
"Most hopeful sons, is nothing now but this,
"The sign and token of himself!" Look, comrades,
Here are the foes have slain him! Not a trace
Of any other — not a body stripp'd —
Our father has been murdered — We'll revenge him
Like sons! Take up the body! Bear it to
The camp; and as you move your solemn march,
Be dumb — or if you speak, be it but a word;
And be that word — Revenge!

[THE SOLDIERS *bear off the body.* — VIRGINIUS, *following, is stopped by* LUCIUS]

LUCIUS. Virginius!
VIRGINIUS. I did not mind thee, Lucius!
Uncommon things make common things forgot.
Hast thou a message for me, Lucius? Well!
I'll stay and hear it — but be brief; my heart
Follows my poor Dentatus.
LUCIUS. You are wanted
In Rome.
VIRGINIUS. On what account?
LUCIUS. On your arrival
You'll learn.
VIRGINIUS. How! is it something can't be told
At once? Speak out, boy! Ha! your looks are loaded
With matter — Is't so heavy that your tongue
Cannot unburden them? Your brother left
The camp on duty yesterday — hath ought
Happen'd to him? Did he arrive in safety?
Is he safe? Is he well?
LUCIUS. He is both safe and well.
VIRGINIUS. What then? What then? Tell me the matter, Lucius.
LUCIUS. I have said
It shall be told you.
VIRGINIUS. Shall! I stay not for
That shall; unless it be so close at hand,
It stop me not a moment. — 'Tis too long
A coming. Fare you well, my Lucius.
LUCIUS. Stay,
Virginius. — Hear me, then, with patience.
VIRGINIUS. Well,
I am patient.
LUCIUS. Your Virginia —
VIRGINIUS. Stop, my Lucius,
I am cold in every member of my frame!
If 'tis prophetic, Lucius, of thy news;
Give me such token as her tomb would, Lucius —
I'll bear it better. — Silence.
LUCIUS. You are still —
VIRGINIUS. I thank thee, Jupiter! I am still a father!
LUCIUS. You are, Virginius, yet —
VIRGINIUS. What, is she sick?
LUCIUS. No.
VIRGINIUS. Neither dead nor sick? All well? No harm?
Nothing amiss? Each guarded quarter safe,
That fear may lay him down and sleep and yet
This sounding the alarm! I swear thou tell'st
A story strangely. — Out with't! I have patience
For any thing, since my Virginia lives,
And lives in health!
LUCIUS. You are requir'd in Rome,
To answer a most novel suit.
VIRGINIUS. Whose suit?
LUCIUS. The suit of Caius Claudius.
VIRGINIUS. Claudius!
LUCIUS. Him that's client
To Appius Claudius, the Decemvir.
VIRGINIUS. What!
That pander! Ha! Virginia! you appear
To couple them. What makes my fair Virginia
In company with Claudius? Innocence
Beside lasciviousness! His suit! What suit? —
Answer me quickly! — Quickly! lest suspense,
Beyond what patience can endure, coercing,
Drive reason from his seat!
LUCIUS. He has claim'd Virginia.

VIRGINIUS. Claim'd her! Claim'd her!
On what pretence?
LUCIUS. He says she is the child
Of a slave of his, who sold her to thy wife.
VIRGINIUS. Go on, you see I'm calm.
LUCIUS. He seiz'd her in
The school, and dragg'd her to the Forum, where
Appius was giving judgment.
VIRGINIUS. Dragged her to
The Forum! Well? — I told you, Lucius,
I would be patient.
LUCIUS. Numitorius there confronted him!
VIRGINIUS. Did he not strike him dead?
True, true, I know it was in presence of
The Decemvir — Oh! had I confronted him!
Well! well! The issue — Well! — O'erleap all else,
And light upon the issue! Where is she?
LUCIUS. I was despatch'd to fetch thee, ere I could learn.
VIRGINIUS. The claim of Claudius — Appius's client — Ha!
I see the master cloud — this ragged one,
That lowers before, moves only in subservience
To the ascendant of the other — Jove
With its own mischief, break it, and disperse it,
And that be all the ruin! Patience! Prudence!
Nay, prudence, but no patience. — Come! a slave,
Dragg'd through the streets in open day! my child!
My daughter! my fair daughter, in the eyes
Of Rome! Oh! I'll be patient. Come! The essence
Of my best blood in the free common ear
Condemn'd as vile! Oh! I'll be patient. Come,
Oh, they shall wonder. — I will be so patient! [*Exeunt*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT

ACT IV

SCENE FIRST. — NUMITORIUS'S *House.*

[VIRGINIA *discovered, supported by* SERVIA]

VIRGINIA. Is he not yet arriv'd? Will he not come?
SERVIA. He surely will.
VIRGINIA. He surely will! More surely
He had arriv'd already, had he known
How he is wanted — "They have miss'd him, Servia!
"Don't tell me, but I know they have, or surely
"We had not now been looking for him." Where's
My uncle?
SERVIA. Finding you had fallen asleep
After such watching, he went forth to hear
If there were any tidings of Virginius.
He's here.

[*Enter* NUMITORIUS. — VIRGINIA *looks at him inquisitively, for some time*]

VIRGINIA. Not come! not come! I am sure of it!
He will not come! Do you not think he'll come?
Will not my father come? What think you, uncle?
Speak to me, speak — Oh, give me any words,
Rather than what looks utter.
NUMITORIUS. Be compos'd!
I hope he'll come!
VIRGINIA. A little while ago
You were sure of it — from certainty to hope
Is a poor step; you hope he'll come — One hope,
One little hope to face a thousand fears!
"Do you not know he'll come? Oh, uncle, wherefore
"Do you not know he'll come? Had I been you,
"I had made sure of it.
"NUMITORIUS. All has been done
"That could be done.
VIRGINIA. "Poor all that does so little!
"One would imagine little needs be done
"To bring a father to the succour of
"His child!" 'Tis near the time!
NUMITORIUS. It is indeed!
VIRGINIA. Must I go forth with you? Must I again
Be dragg'd along by Claudius as his slave,
And none again to succour me? Icilius!
Icilius! Does your true betrothèd wife
Call on you, and you hear not? My Icilius!
Am I to be your wife or Claudius' slave?
Where — where are you, Icilius?

[*Enter* Icilius]

Icilius. My Virginia!
What's to be done, my friend? 'tis almost time.
[*To* Numitorius]

Virginia. I hear what you are saying — it is time —
"Oh, who could have believed it, that Icilius
"Should ever say 'twas time to yield me to
"Another's claim." — And will you give me up?
Can you devise no means to keep me from him?
Could we not fly?

[Icilius *looks earnestly at* Numitorius, *who fixes his eyes steadfastly on the ground;* Icilius *droops his head*]

I see! — Your pledge
Must be redeem'd, although it cost you your
Virginia.

Virginius [*without*]. Is she here?

Virginia. Ah!

[*Shrieks and rushes into her father's arms, who enters at the moment*]

Virginius. My child! my child!

Virginia. I am! I feel I am! I know I am!
My father! my dear father! "I despair'd
"Of seeing you!" You're come! and come in time.
And, oh! how much the more in time, when hope
Had given you up. "Oh! welcome, welcome foot,
"Whose wishèd step is heard when least expected!"

Virginius. Brother! Icilius! thank you! thank you — All
Has been communicated to me. Ay!
And would they take thee from me? Let them try it!
You've ta'en your measures well — I scarce could pass
Along, so was I check'd by loving hands
Ready to serve me. Hands with hearts in them!
So thou art Claudius' slave? And if thou art,
I'm surely not thy father! Blister'd villain!
You have warn'd our neighbours, have you not, to attend
As witnesses? To be sure you have. A fool
To ask the question! Dragg'd along the streets, too!
'Twas very kind in him to go himself
And fetch thee — such an honour should not pass
Without acknowledgment. I shall return it
In full! In full!

Numitorius. Pray you be prudent, brother.

Virginia. Dear father, be advis'd — Will you not, father?

Virginius. I never saw you look so like your mother
In all my life!

Virginia. You'll be advis'd, dear father?

Virginius. It was her soul — her soul, that play'd just then
About the features of her child, and lit them
Into the likeness of her own. When first
She plac'd thee in my arms — I recollect it
As a thing of yesterday! — she wish'd, she said,
That it had been a man. I answer'd her,
It was the mother of a race of men,
And paid her for thee with a kiss. Her lips
Are cold now — could they but be warm'd again,
How they would clamour for thee!

Virginia. My dear father,
You do not answer me! Will you not be advis'd?

Virginius. I will not take him by the throat and strangle him!
But I could do it! I could do it! Fear not:
I will not strike while any head I love
Is in the way. It is not now a time
To tell thee — but, would'st thou believe it! — honest
Sicinius Dentatus has been murder'd by them.

Icilius. Murder'd!

Numitorius. Dentatus murder'd!

Virginia. Oh! how much
Have we to fear.

Virginius. We have the less to fear.
I spread the news at every step — A fire
Is kindled, that will blaze at but a breath
Into the fiercest flame!

Numitorius. 'Tis time. Let's haste
To the Forum.

Virginius. Let the Forum wait for us!
Put on no show of fear, when villainy

Would wrestle with you! It can keep its feet
Only with cowards! I shall walk along
Slowly and calmly, with my daughter thus
In my hand: though with another kind of gripe
Than that which Claudius gave her. Well, I say,
I'll walk along thus, in the eyes of Rome.
Go you before, and what appeal soe'er
You please, make you to rouse up friends. For me,
I shall be mute — my eloquence is here —
Her tears — her youth — her innocence — her beauty.
If orators like these can't move the heart,
Tongues surely may be dumb.
ICILIUS. A thousand hearts
Have spoke already in her cause!
VIRGINIUS. Come on!
Fear not! it is your father's grasp you feel.
Oh, he'll be strong as never man was, that
Will take thee from it. Come, Virginia;
We trust our cause to Rome and to the gods! [*Exeunt*]

SCENE SECOND. — *The Forum.*

[*Enter* APPIUS *and* LICTORS]

APPIUS. See you keep back the people! Use your fasces
With firmer hands, or hearts. Your hands are firm
Enough, would but your hearts perform their office,
"And leave your hands at liberty, not hang
"Upon them with unseemly fears and clamours!"
Look to it! "Time! hadst thou the theme that I have
"For speed, thou would'st not move this cripple's gait:
"But there's no urging thee, and thou wast ever
"Dull fellow traveller to young Impatience,
"Dragging him back upon the road he pants
"To run, but cannot find without thee."

[*Enter* MARCUS]

Well?
MARCUS. News has arriv'd, that speaks as if Dentatus
Was murder'd by the order of your colleagues!
There's not a face I meet but lowers with it:
The streets are fill'd with thronging groups, that, as
You pass, grow silent, and look sullen round on you,
Then fall again to converse.
APPIUS. 'Tis ill tim'd.
MARCUS. What say you, Appius?
APPIUS. Murder's ill tim'd, I say,
Happen when 'twill; but now is most ill tim'd,
When Rome is in a ferment, on account
Of Claudius, and this girl he calls his slave;
"For come when evil will, or how it will,
"All's laid to our account!" Look out and see
If Claudius be approaching yet. [*Exit* MARCUS]
"My wish,
"Like an officious friend, comes out of time
"To tell me of success. I had rather far
"It had miscarried — they run high enough;
"They wanted not this squall on squall to raise them
"Above their present swell — the waves run high
"Enough, through which we steer: — but such a haven,
"If won, can never be too dearly won!"
MARCUS [*entering*]. Claudius is here!

[*Enter* CLAUDIUS]

APPIUS. Well, Claudius, are the forces
At hand?
CLAUDIUS. They are, and timely, too; the people
Are in unwonted ferment.
APPIUS. I have heard
Word has arriv'd of old Dentatus' death;
Which, as I hear, and wonder not to hear it,
The mutinous citizens lay to our account.
CLAUDIUS. That's bad enough; yet —
APPIUS. Ha! what's worse?
CLAUDIUS. 'Tis best
At once to speak what you must learn at last,
Yet last of all would learn.
APPIUS. Virginius!
CLAUDIUS. Yes!
He has arriv'd in Rome.

MARCUS. They are coming, Appius.

CLAUDIUS. Fly, Marcus, hurry down the forces! [*Exit* MARCUS] Appius,
Be not o'erwhelm'd!

APPIUS. There's something awes me at
The thought of looking on her father!

CLAUDIUS. Look
Upon her, my Appius! Fix your gaze upon
The treasures of her beauty, nor avert it
Till they are thine. Haste! Your tribunal! Haste!

[APPIUS *ascends the Tribunal Enter* NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, VIRGINIUS *leading his Daughter*, SERVIA, *and* CITIZENS. — *A dead silence prevails*]

VIRGINIUS. Does no one speak? I am defendant here.
Is silence my opponent? Fit opponent
To plead a cause too foul for speech! What brow
Shameless, gives front to this most valiant cause,
That tries its prowess 'gainst the honour of
A girl; yet lacks the wit to know, that they
Who cast off shame, should likewise cast off fear —
"And on the verge o' the combat wants the nerve
"To stammer forth the signal?"

APPIUS. You had better,
Virginius, wear another kind of carriage;
This is not of the fashion that will serve you.

VIRGINIUS. The fashion, Appius! Appius Claudius, tell me
The fashion it becomes a man to speak in,
Whose property in his own child — the offspring
Of his own body, near to him as is
His hand, his arm — yea, nearer — closer far,
Knit to his heart — I say, who has his property
In such a thing, the very self of himself,
Disputed; and I'll speak so, Appius Claudius;
I'll speak so — Pray you, tutor me!

APPIUS. Stand forth,
Claudius! If you lay claim to any interest
In the question now before us, speak! If not,
Bring on some other cause.

CLAUDIUS. Most noble Appius —

VIRGINIUS. And are you the man
That claims my daughter for his slave? — Look at me,
And I will give her to thee.

CLAUDIUS. She is mine, then:
Do I not look at you?

VIRGINIUS. Your eye does, truly,
But not your soul. — I see it through your eye,
Shifting and shrinking — turning every way
To shun me. "You surprise me, that your eye,
"So long the bully of its master, knows not
"To put a proper face upon a lie,
"But gives the port of impudence to falsehood,
"When it would pass it off for truth." Your soul
Dares as soon show its face to me! — Go on,
I had forgot; the fashion of my speech
May not please Appius Claudius.

CLAUDIUS. I demand
Protection of the Decemvir!

APPIUS. You shall have it.

VIRGINIUS. Doubtless!

APPIUS. Keep back the people, Lictors! What's
Your plea? You say the girl's your slave — Produce
Your proofs.

CLAUDIUS. My proof is here, which, if they can,
Let them confront. The mother of the girl —

[VIRGINIUS, *stepping forward to speak, is withheld by* NUMITORIUS]

NUMITORIUS. Hold, brother! Hear them out, or suffer me
To speak.

VIRGINIUS. Man, I must speak, or else go mad!
And if I do go mad, what then will hold me
From speaking? "Were't not better, brother, think you,
"To speak and not go mad, than to go mad,
"And then to speak?" She was thy sister, too!
Well, well, speak thou. — I'll try, and if I can,
Be silent. [*Retires*]

NUMITORIUS. Will she swear she is her child?

VIRGINIUS [*starting forward*]. To be sure she will — a most wise question that!

Is she not his slave? Will his tongue lie for him —
Or his hand steal — or the finger of his hand
Beckon, or point, or shut, or open for him?
To ask him if she'll swear! — Will she walk or run,
Sing, dance, or wag her head; do any thing
That is most easy done? She'll as soon swear!
What mockery it is to have one's life
In jeopardy by such a bare-fac'd trick!
Is it to be endur'd? I do protest
Against her oath!

APPIUS. No law in Rome, Virginius,
Seconds you. If she swear the girl's her child,
The evidence is good, unless confronted
By better evidence. Look you to that,
Virginius. I shall take the woman's oath.

VIRGINIA. Icilius!

ICILIUS. Fear not, love; a thousand oaths
Will answer her.

APPIUS. [*To the* SLAVE]. You swear the girl's your child,
And that you sold her to Virginius' wife,
Who pass'd her for her own — Is that your oath?

SLAVE [*coming round to the front of the Tribunal*]. It is my oath.

APPIUS. Your answer now, Virginius.

VIRGINIUS. Here it is!

[*Brings* VIRGINIA *forward*]

Is this the daughter of a slave? I know
'Tis not with men, as shrubs and trees, that by
The shoot you know the rank and order of
The stem. Yet who from such a stem would look
For such a shoot? My witnesses are these —
The relatives and friends of Numitoria,
Who saw her, ere Virginia's birth, sustain
The burden which a mother bears, nor feels
The weight, with longing for the sight of it.
Here are the ears that listen'd to her sighs
In nature's hour of labour, which subsides
In the embrace of joy — the hands, that when
The day first look'd upon the infant's face,
And never look'd so pleased, help'd them up to it,
And bless'd her for a blessing — Here, the eyes
That saw her lying at the generous
And sympathetic fount, that at her cry
Sent forth a stream of liquid living pearl
To cherish her enamell'd veins. The lie
Is most unfruitful, then, that takes the flower —
The very flower our bed connubial grew —
To prove its barrenness! Speak for me, friends;
Have I not spoke the truth?

WOMEN AND CITIZENS. You have, Virginius.

APPIUS. Silence! keep silence there. — No more of that!
You're very ready for a tumult, Citizens.
[*Troops appear behind*]
Lictors, make way to let these troops advance!
We have had a taste of your forbearance, masters,
And wish not for another.

VIRGINIUS. Troops in the Forum!

APPIUS. Virginius, have you spoken?

VIRGINIUS. If you have heard me,
I have; if not, I'll speak again.

APPIUS. You need not,
Virginius; I have evidence to give,
Which, should you speak a hundred times again,
Would make your pleading vain.

VIRGINIUS. Your hand, Virginia!
Stand close to me. [*Aside*]

APPIUS. My conscience will not let me
Be silent. 'Tis notorious to you all,
That Claudius' father, at his death, declar'd me
The guardian of his son — This cheat has long
Been known to me. I know the girl is not
Virginius' daughter.

VIRGINIUS. Join your friends, Icilius,
And leave Virginia to my care. [*Aside*]

"APPIUS. The justice
"I should have done my client, unrequir'd,
"Now cited by him, how shall I refuse?"

VIRGINIUS. Don't tremble, girl! don't tremble. [*Aside*]

APPIUS. Virginius,
I feel for you; but, though you were my father,

The majesty of justice should be sacred —
Claudius must take Virginia home with him!

VIRGINIUS. And if he must, I should advise him, Appius,
To take her home in time, before his guardian
Complete the violation, which his eyes
Already have begun. [*Turning to* CITIZENS] Friends! fellow citizens!
Look not on Claudius — Look on your Decemvir!
He is the master claims Virginia!
The tongues that told him she was not my child
Are these — the costly charms he cannot purchase,
Except by making her the slave of Claudius,
His client, his purveyor, that caters for
His pleasures — markets for him — picks, and scents,
And tastes, that he may banquet — serves him up
His sensual feast, and is not now asham'd,
In the open, common street, before your eyes —
Frighting your daughters' and your matrons' cheeks
With blushes they ne'er thought to meet — to help him
To the honour of a Roman maid! my child!
Who now clings to me, as you see, as if
This second Tarquin had already coil'd
His arms around her. Look upon her, Romans!
Befriend her! succour her! see her not polluted
Before her father's eyes! — He is but one!
Tear her from Appius and his Lictors, while
She is unstain'd — Your hands! your hands! your hands!

CITIZENS. They are yours, Virginius.

APPIUS. Keep the people back —
Support my Lictors, soldiers! Seize the girl,
And drive the people back.

ICILIUS. Down with the slaves!

[*The people make a show of resistance, but, upon the advancing of the* SOLDIERS, *retreat, and leave* ICILIUS, VIRGINIUS *and his Daughter, &c., in the hands of* APPIUS *and his party*]

Deserted! — Cowards! Traitors! "Let me free
"But for a moment! I relied on you;
"Had I relied upon myself alone
"I had kept them still at bay! I kneel to you —
"Let me but loose a moment, if 'tis only
"To rush upon your swords!"

VIRGINIUS. Icilius, peace!
You see how 'tis, we are deserted, left
Alone by our friends, surrounded by our enemies,
Nerveless and helpless.

APPIUS. Away with him!

ICILIUS. Virginia! Tyrant! My Virginia!

APPIUS. Away with him!

[ICILIUS *is borne off*]

Separate them, Lictors!

VIRGINIUS. Let them forbear awhile, I pray you, Appius;
It is not very easy. Though her arms
Are tender, yet the hold is strong, by which
She grasps me, Appius. Forcing them will hurt them,
They'll soon unclasp themselves. Wait but a little —
You know you're sure of her!

APPIUS. I have not time
To idle with thee, give her to my Lictors.

VIRGINIUS. Appius, I pray you, wait! If she's not
My child, she hath been like a child to me
For fifteen years. If I am not her father
I have been like a father to her, Appius,
For even such a time. "They that have liv'd
"So long a time together, in so near
"And dear society, may be allow'd
"A little time for parting." Let me take
The maid aside, I pray you, and confer
A moment with her nurse; perhaps she'll give me
Some token, will unloose a tie, so twin'd
And knotted round my heart, that if you break it
My heart breaks with it.

APPIUS. Have your wish. Be brief!
Lictors, look to them.

VIRGINIA. Do you go from me!
Do you leave! Father! Father!

VIRGINIUS. No, my child;
No, my Virginia — come along with me.

VIRGINIA. Will you not leave me? Will you take me with you?
Will you take me home again? Oh, bless you, bless you!
My father! my dear father! Art thou not
My father?

[VIRGINIUS, *perfectly at a loss what to do, looks anxiously around the Forum; at length his eye falls on a butcher's stall, with a knife upon it*]

VIRGINIUS. This way, my child — No, no! I am not going
To leave thee, my Virginia! I'll not leave thee.

APPIUS. "Keep back the people, soldiers! Let them not
"Approach Virginius! Keep the people back!"

[VIRGINIUS *secures the knife*]

Well, have you done?

VIRGINIUS. Short time for converse, Appius;
But I have.

APPIUS. I hope you are satisfied.

VIRGINIUS. I am —
I am — that she is my daughter!

APPIUS. Take her, Lictors!

[VIRGINIA *shrieks and falls half dead upon her father's shoulder*]

VIRGINIUS. Another moment, pray you. Bear with me
A little — 'Tis my last embrace. 'Twon't try
Your patience beyond bearing, if you're a man!
Lengthen it as I may, I cannot make it
Long! My dear child! My dear Virginia! [*Kissing her*]
There is one only way to save thine honour —
'Tis this! —

[*Stabs her and draws out the knife.* ICILIUS *breaks from the soldiers that held him, and catches her*]

Lo! Appius! with this innocent blood,
I do devote thee to th' infernal gods!
Make way there!

APPIUS. Stop him! Seize him!

VIRGINIUS. If they dare
To tempt the desperate weapon that is madden'd
With drinking my daughter's blood, why, let them: Thus
It rushes in amongst them. Way there! Way! [*Exit through the* SOLDIERS]

"[*Enter* HONORIUS *and* VALERIUS]

"HONORIUS. What tumult's this? —
"The fair Virginia
"Kill'd by her father's hand, to save her from
"The lust of Appius Claudius? Most foul cause,
"That makes so dark a deed look fair!

"APPIUS. Remove
"The body, Lictors.

"ICILIUS. At the peril of
"Their lives! Death is abroad, at work, and most
"In earnest when with such a feat as this
"He opens his exploits!

"APPIUS. Obey me, slaves!

"HONORIUS. Defend the body, freemen. There's a spark
"Remaining still, which, though not strong enough
"To light it up with its own beauteous life,
"May yet rekindle liberty, and save
"Expiring Rome!

"CITIZENS. It shall not be removed!

"APPIUS. Seize it, I say!

"VALERIUS. Back, slaves! Give place to freemen!

"[*A tumult ensues; the people de-*
"*prive the* LICTORS *of their*
"*fasces, and drive them, with*
"*the* SOLDIERS, *with* APPIUS
"CLAUDIUS, *&c., off the Stage,*
"*then return shouting*]

"ICILIUS. Ay, shout, and shout: a far more glorious cause
"Call'd for your voices, and you had not then
"The breath to whisper. How that ear had thank'd you,
"Had you as tender been of the jewel of
"Its precious sense, as of the empty casket!

"HONORIUS. A litter, Citizens, to lift the body,
"And bear it through the streets; a spectacle
"Will fill all eyes with tears, all hearts with fire!

"ICILIUS. No hand but mine shall touch it: I will be
"Its living bier.

"HONORIUS. Icilius, listen to me!
"Thou art not now thyself, and knowest not
"There is a sweeter strain than that of grief —
"Revenge, that drowns it. Suffer us to bear
"Thy bride along the streets; a second, but
"Unstain'd Lucretia, buying, with her blood,
"The life of Rome and freedom!

"ICILIUS. Rome and freedom!
"There is your ransom! such a costly one —
"Oh, you are dear, to be so dearly won!

"[*Exeunt*]"

END OF THE FOURTH ACT

ACT V

SCENE FIRST. — *A Street.*

[*Enter* APPIUS]

APPIUS. I do abjure all further league with them:
They have most basely yielded up their pow'r,
"And compromis'd their glory. Had they died
"In their high seats, they had liv'd demi-gods;
"But now they live to die like basest men!"
Power gone, life follows! Well! 'tis well we know
The worst! The worst? — The worst is yet to come,
And if I err not, hither speeds a messenger
Whose heel it treads upon.

[*Enter* VIBULANUS, *hastily, and other* DECEMVIRS, *with* MARCUS]

VIBULANUS. Honorius and Valerius are elected
To the Consulate. — Virginius is made Tribune —
"APPIUS. No doubt they'd fill their offices, when ours
"Were laid so poorly down. — You have acted wisely!
"VIBULANUS. Who could resist Virginius, raving at
"The head of the revolted troops, with all
"The commons up in arms? Waste not dear time!
"Look to your safety, Appius. 'Tis resolv'd
"To cite you instantly before the Consuls.
"APPIUS. Look to my safety, say you? You would bid
"A man that's tumbling from a precipice
"A hundred fathoms high, and midway down,
"Look to his safety! What has he to snatch at?
"Air! — E'en so much have I.
"VIBULANUS. Withdraw awhile
"From Rome. We shall recall you with applause
"And honours.
"APPIUS. Yes! you saw me on the brink —
"Beheld it giving way beneath my feet —
"And saw me tottering o'er the hideous leap,
"Whose sight sent round the brain with madd'ning whirl,
"With but a twig to stay me, which you cut,
"Because it was your friend that hung by it —
"Most kindly.
"VIBULANUS. Nay," employ the present time
In looking to your safety — "that secur'd,
"Reproach us as you will."
APPIUS. I am in your hands,
Lead me which way you please.
ICILIUS [*without*]. Hold! Stand!

[*Enter* ICILIUS, *with* NUMITORIUS *and* LICTORS]

Did I not tell you 'twas the tyrant? Look,
Was I not right? I felt that he was present,
Ere mine eye told it me. — You are our prisoner.
APPIUS. Your prisoner! On what pretence, Icilius?
ICILIUS. Inquire of your audacious deeds, "that laid
"Your country's liberties prostrate." Not to speak
Of any private wrong — but to reply
Touching a private wrong — inquire of poor
Virginius, tottering between despair
And madness, as he seeks the home, where once
He found a daughter!
APPIUS. I demand due time
To make up my defence.
ICILIUS. Demand due time!
Appius! — Assign the cause why you denied
A Roman maid, of free condition,
Her liberty provisionally, while
Her plea remain'd unjudg'd. No answer, Appius?
Lictors, lay hold upon him — to prison with him!
Look to him well. To prison with the tyrant!

[*Exeunt* APPIUS *and* LICTORS *on one side,* ICILIUS *and* NUMITORIUS *on the other*]

VIBULANUS. Let all his friends, that their own safety prize,

Solicit straight for his enlargement; doff
Their marks of station, and to the vulgar eye
Disguise it with the garb of mourning: 'twill
Conciliate the crowd. — We know them well:
But humour them, they are water soon as fire! [*Exeunt severally*]

SCENE SECOND. — VIRGINIUS'S *House*

[*Enter* LUCIUS *and* SERVIA]

LUCIUS. Is he not yet come home?
SERVIA. Not since her death.
I dread his coming home, good Lucius.
LUCIUS. A step! 'Tis Numitorius and Virginius.
SERVIA. Gods! how he looks! —
See, Lucius, how he looks!

[*Enter* VIRGINIUS, *attended by* NUMITORIUS *and others*]

VIRGINIUS. 'Tis ease! 'tis ease! I am content! 'Tis peace,
'Tis anything that is most soft and quiet.
And after such a dream! — I want my daughter;
Send me my daughter!
NUMITORIUS. Yes, his reason's gone.
Scarce had he come in sight of his once sweet
And happy home, ere with a cry he fell
As one struck dead. — When to himself he came,
We found him as you see. How is it, brother?
VIRGINIUS. How should it be but well? Our cause is good.
Think you Rome will stand by, and see a man
Robb'd of his child? We are bad enough, but yet
They should not so mistake us. "We are slaves,
"But not yet monsters." — Call my daughter to me.
What keeps her thus? I never stept within
The threshold yet, without her meeting me
With a kiss. She's very long a-coming. Call her!
NUMITORIUS. Icilius comes! See, my Icilius, see!

[*Enter* ICILIUS]

VIRGINIUS. Come, come, make ready. Brother, you and he
Go on before: I'll bring her after you.
ICILIUS. Ha!
NUMITORIUS. My Icilius, what a sight is there!
Virginius' reason is a wreck, so stripp'd
And broken by wave and wind, you scarce
Would know it was the gallant bark you saw
Riding so late in safety!
ICILIUS [*taking* VIRGINIUS'S *hand*]. Father! Father!
That art no more a father!
VIRGINIUS. Ha! what wet
Is this upon my hand? A tear, boy! Fie,
For shame! Is that the weapon you would guard
Your bride with? First essay what steel can do!
NUMITORIUS. Not a tear has bless'd his eye since her death.
"No wonder.
"The fever of his brain, that now burns out,
"Has drunk the source of sorrow's torrents dry.
"ICILIUS. You would not have it otherwise? 'Twas fit
"The bolt, that struck the sole remaining branch,
"And blasted it, should set the trunk on fire!"
NUMITORIUS. If we could make him weep —
ICILIUS. I have that will make him,
If aught will do it. 'Tis her urn. 'Twas that
Which first drew tears from me. I'll fetch it. But
I cannot think you wise, to wake a man
Who's at the mercy of a tempest. Better
You suffer him to sleep it through. [*Exit* ICILIUS]
VIRGINIUS. Gather your friends together: tell them of
Dentatus' murder. Screw the chord of rage
To the topmost pitch. Mine own is not mine own! [*Laughs*]
That's strange enough. Why does he not dispute
My right to my own flesh, and tell my heart
Its blood is not its own? He might as well. [*Laughs*]
But I want my child.

[*Enter* Lucius]

Lucius. Justice will be defeated!

Virginius. Who says that?
He lies in the face of the gods! She is immutable,
Immaculate, and immortal! And though all
The guilty globe should blaze, she will spring up
Through the fire, and soar above the crackling pile,
With not a downy feather ruffled by
Its fierceness!

Numitorius. He is not himself! What new
Oppression comes to tell us to our teeth,
We only mock'd ourselves to think the days
Of thraldom past?

Lucius. The friends of Appius
Beset the people with solicitations.
The fickle crowd, that change with every change,
Begin to doubt and soften; "doubtless that the stones,
"They wont to vent their griefs to, turn to flesh,
"Touch'd by their own calamity." Each moment
That's lost, a friend is lost. Appear among
Your friends, or lose them!

Numitorius. Lucius, you
Remain, and watch Virginius.

[*Exit, followed by all but* Lucius *and* Servia]

Virginius. You remember,
Don't you, nurse?

Servia. What, Virginius?

Virginius. That she nurs'd
The child herself. "Inquire among your gossips,
"Which of them saw it; and, with such of them
"As can avouch the fact, without delay,
"Repair to the Forum." Will she come or not?
I'll call myself! — She will not dare! — Oh, when
Did my Virginia dare — Virginia!
Is it a voice, or nothing, answers me?
I hear a sound so fine — there's nothing lives
'Twixt it and silence. "Such a slender one
"I've heard, when I have talk'd with her in fancy!
"A phantom sound!" Aha! She is not here!
They told me she was here: they have deceiv'd me;
And Appius was not made to give her up,
But keeps her, and effects his wicked purpose,
While I stand talking here, and ask you if
My daughter is my daughter! Though a legion
Sentried that brothel, which he calls his palace,
I'd tear her from him!

Lucius. Hold, Virginius! Stay!
Appius is now in prison.

Virginius. With my daughter!
He has secur'd her there! Ha! has he so?
Gay office for a dungeon! Hold me not,
Or I will dash you down, and spoil you for
My keeper. My Virginia, struggle with him!
Appal him with thy shrieks; ne'er faint, ne'er faint!
I am coming to thee! I am coming to thee!

[*Rushes out, followed by* Lucius Servia, *and others*]

Scene Third. — *A Dungeon.*

[Appius *discovered*]

Appius. From the palace to the dungeon is a road
Trod oft, not oft retrod. What hope have I
To pace it back again? I know of none.
I am as one that's dead! "The dungeon, that
"Encloses fallen greatness, may as well
"Be called its tomb." I am as much the carcass
Of myself, as if the string were taken from
My neck. Their hands long for the office. Oh,
'Tis worth the half of a Plebeian's life
To get his greasy fingers on the throat
Of a Patrician! But I'll balk them. Come!
Appius shall have an executioner
No less illustrious than himself.

[*He is on the point of swallowing poison, when* Vibulanus *enters*]

Who's there?

Vibulanus. Your friend!

Appius. My Vibulanus!

VIBULANUS. Appius, what
Was that you hid in such confusion as
I enter'd?
APPIUS. 'Tis a draught for life, which, swallow'd,
She relishes so richly, that she cares not
If she ne'er drink again! Here's health to you!
VIBULANUS. Not out of such a cup as that, my Appius.
"Despair, that bids you drink it, as the cure
"Of canker'd life, but lies to you, and turns
"Your eyes from hope, that even now stands ready
"With outstretch'd arms, to rush to your embrace."
Your friends are busy for you with your foes —
Your foes become your friends. Where'er a frown
Appears against you, nothing's spar'd to make
The wearer doff it, and put up a smile
In its stead. "Your colleague Oppius is in prison.
"Your client, too. Their harm's your safety: it
"Distracts the appetite o' the dogs. They drop
"The morsel they took up before, as soon
"As a new one's thrown to them."
APPIUS. Thou giv'st me life
Indeed!
VIBULANUS. That I may give thee life indeed,
I'll waste no longer time with thee; "for that
"Already taken to assure thee of
"Thy fast reviving fortunes, cheats them of
"The aid should help to re-establish them."
Farewell, my Appius! If my absence takes
A friend from thee, it leaves one with thee — Hope! [*Exit*]
APPIUS. And I will clasp it to me! Never friend
Made sweeter promises. But snatch me from
Beneath the feet of the vile herd, that's now
Broke loose and roams at large, I'll show them who
They'd trample on. "Hope! Hope! They say of thee,
"Thou art a friend that promises, but cares not
"To keep his word. This once keep thine with Appius,
"And he will give thee out so true a tongue,
"Thy word is bond enough!" — At liberty!
Again at liberty! Oh, give me power
As well, for every minute of my thraldom
I'll pick a victim from the common herd
Shall groan his life in bondage. "Liberty!
"'Tis triumph, power, dominion, every thing!"
Are ye not open yet, ye servile gates?
Let fall your chains, and push your bolts aside!
It is your past and future lord commands you!
VIRGINIUS [*rushing in*]. Give me my daughter!
APPIUS. Ha!
VIRGINIUS. My child! my daughter!
My daughter! my Virginia! Give her me!
APPIUS. Thy daughter!
VIRGINIUS. Ay! Deny that she is mine,
And I will strangle thee, unless the lie
Should choke thee first.
APPIUS. Thy daughter!
VIRGINIUS. Play not with me!
Provoke me not! Equivocate, and lo!
Thou sport'st with fire. I am wild, distracted, mad!
I am all a flame — a flame! I tell thee once
For all, I want my child, and I will have her;
So give her to me.
APPIUS. Caged with a madman! Hoa!
Without, there!
VIRGINIUS. Not a step thou stirr'st from hence,
Till I have found my child. "Attempt that noise
"Again, and I will stop the vent, that not
"A squeak shall pass it. There are plugs for you,
"Will keep it air-tight. [*Shows his fingers*]" Please you, give me back
My daughter.
APPIUS. In truth she is not here, Virginius;
Or I would give her to thee.
VIRGINIUS. Would? Ay, should!
Tho' would were would not. Do you say, indeed,
She is not here? You nothing know of her?

APPIUS. Nothing, Virginius! good Virginius, nothing.
VIRGINIUS. How if I thrust my hand into your breast,
And tore your heart out, and confronted it
With your tongue? I'd like it. Shall we try it? Fool!
Are not the ruffians leagued? The one would swear
To the tale o' the other.
APPIUS. By the gods, Virginius,
Your daughter is not in my keeping.
VIRGINIUS. Well,
Then I must seek her elsewhere. I did dream
That I had murder'd her — You lie! 'twas but
A dream — She isn't here, you say — Well! well!
Then I must go and seek her elsewhere — Yet
She's not at home — and where else should I seek her,
But there or here? Here! here! here! Yes, I say,
But there or here — I tell you I must find her —
She must be here, or what do you here? What,
But such a wonder of rich beauty could
Deck out a dungeon, so as to despoil
A palace of its tenant? Art thou not
The tyrant Appius? — Did'st thou not decree
My daughter to be Claudius' slave, who gave her
To his master? Have you not secur'd her here
To compass her dishonour, ere her father
Arrives to claim her?
APPIUS. No.
VIRGINIUS. Do you tell me so?
Vile tyrant! Think you, shall I not believe
My own eyes before your tongue? Why, there she is!
There at your back — her locks dishevell'd, and
Her vestment torn! Her cheeks all faded with
Her pouring tears, "as flowers with too much rain!"
Her form no longer kept and treasur'd up,
"By her maiden-pride, like a rich casket, cast
"Aside, neglected, and forgot, because
"The richer gem was shrin'd in it is lost!"
Villain! is this a sight to show a father?
And have I not a weapon to requite thee? [*Searches about his clothes*]
Ha! here are ten!
APPIUS. Keep down your hands! Help! help!
VIRGINIUS. No other look but that! Look on! look on!
It turns my very flesh to steel — Brave girl!
Keep thine eye fix'd — let it not twink — Look on! [*Exeunt, struggling*]

[*Enter* NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, LUCIUS, GUARD, *and* SOLDIER, *bearing* VIRGINIA'S *Urn*]

NUMITORIUS. Not here!
LUCIUS. Is this the dungeon? — Appius is not here,
Nor yet Virginius. You have sure mistaken.
GUARD. This is the dungeon — Here Virginius entered.
NUMITORIUS. Yet is not here! Hush! The abode of death
Is just as silent. Gods! should the tyrant take
The father's life, in satisfaction for
The deed that robb'd him of the daughter's charms —
Hush! hark! A groan! There's something stirs.
LUCIUS. 'Tis this way!
NUMITORIUS. Come on! Protect him, gods, or pardon me,
If with my own hand I revenge his death. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE FOURTH. — *Another Dungeon.* — VIRGINIUS *discovered on one knee, with* APPIUS *lying dead before him.*

[*Enter* NUMITORIUS, ICILIUS, *with the Urn of* VIRGINIA, *and* LUCIUS]

NUMITORIUS. What's here? Virginius! with the tyrant prostrate and dead!
LUCIUS. His senses are benumb'd; there is no adit to his mind, by which our words can reach it. Help to raise him: the motion may recall perception.
NUMITORIUS. His eye is not so deathlike fix'd: it moves a little.
LUCIUS. Speak to him, Numitorius; he knows your voice the best.
NUMITORIUS. Virginius!
LUCIUS. I think he hears you; speak again.
NUMITORIUS. Virginius!
VIRGINIUS. Ah!

LUCIUS. That sigh has burst the spell which held him.

NUMITORIUS. Virginius! my dear brother!

VIRGINIUS. Lighter! lighter! My heart is ten times lighter! What a load it has heaved off! Where is he? I thought I had done it.

NUMITORIUS. Virginius!

VIRGINIUS. Well, who are you? What do you want? I'll answer what I've done.

NUMITORIUS. Do you not know me, brother? Speak, Icilius, try if he knows you.

ICILIUS. Virginius!

NUMITORIUS. Virginius!

VIRGINIUS. That voice — that voice — I know that voice!
It minds me of a voice was coupled with it,
And made such music, once to hear it was
Enough to make it ever after be
Remembered! [ICILIUS *places the Urn in his hand*] What's this?

ICILIUS. Virginia!

[VIRGINIUS *looks alternately at* ICILIUS *and the Urn — looks at* NUMITORIUS *and* LUCIUS — *seems particularly struck by his mourning — looks at the Urn again — bursts into a passion of tears, and exclaims,* "Virginia!" — *Falls on* ICILIUS'S *neck. Curtain drops*]

END OF THE FIFTH ACT

EPILOGUE

Written by Barry Cornwall, Esq., and spoken by Miss Brunton

Leaving the common path, which many tread,
We will not wake with jokes our poet's dead;
Nor shame the young creations of his pen,
By bidding all, who've perish'd, be again.
The pale Virginia, in her bloody shroud,
Lies like a shrinèd saint. — Oh! then, aloud
Shall we break scurril jests, and bid depart
Those thoughts of her, which fill and teach the heart?
No moral now we offer, squar'd in form,
But Pity, like the sun-light, bright and warm,
Comes mix'd with showers; and, fading, leaves behind
A beauty and a blossom on the mind.
We do not strain to show that "thus it grows."
And "hence we learn" what every body knows:
But, casting idle dogmas (words) aside,
We paint a villain in his purple pride;
And, tearing down a pow'r that grew too bold,
Show — merely what was done in days of old.
Leaving this image on the soul, we go
Unto our gentler story, touch'd with woe;
(With woe that wantons not, nor wears away
The heart) and love too perfect for decay.
But whatsoe'er we do, we will not shame
Your better feeling, with an idle game
Of grin and mimicry (a loathsome task);
Or strip the great Muse of her mighty mask,
And hoot her from her throne of tears and sighs,
Until, from folly and base jest, she dies.
No; let her life be long, her reign supreme —
If but a dream, it is a glorious dream.
Dwell, then, upon our tale; and bear along
With you, deep thoughts — of love — of bitter wrong —
Of freedom — of sad pity — and lust of pow'r.
The tale is fitted for an after hour.

BLACK-EY'D SUSAN; OR, "ALL IN THE DOWNS"

(1829)

By Douglas Jerrold

MARIN COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

DOUGLAS JERROLD

(1803–1857)

Douglas Jerrold's talents were so many-sided, he was so closely associated with that school of wit which flourished at the editorial table of *Punch*, that it is hard to separate him from that group, and to estimate him solely as a dramatist. He watched the theatre, as his associates watched it; he attempted various forms of drama, passing from "Black-ey'd Susan" and "The Rent Day" to "Thomas à Becket" with an ease which characterized all the early Victorian playwrights. His two best-known dramas reflect Jerrold's ability to estimate popular taste, on the one hand, and to take advantage of historical interest, on the other. The success of "Black-ey'd Susan", for instance, was largely due to the pride with which England regarded her navy after the exploits of Nelson. "The Rent Day" utilized the reform spirit which was dominating Parliament, and which resulted in the removal of laws and customs which had held the lower classes of England in bondage. In other words, Jerrold was impelled toward the new spirit, just as Robertson was attracted to the breaking down of social barriers in "Caste", by the legislation of the time. Added to which, his traditions were of the theatre, his father, Samuel Jerrold, having been an actor, and he, as a small boy, having learned to read and write from members of his father's company.

Jerrold's life history is peculiarly one of association with the keenest literary minds of the time. He was the friend of Thackeray, of Dickens, of Tom Taylor, Leech, Tenniel, and Mark Lemon. He was loved by them and, in turn, he was disliked by them. For his tongue was sharp, and his wit was often cruel. It is said that Thackeray who, though famed for his quick satire, was of the most sensitive temperament, was wont to tear the wrapper from his weekly copy of *Punch* with fear as to "what Master Jerrold was saying about him now."

In early life Jerrold was a sailor. He shipped at a time when conditions were at their worst (1813). In 1815, he was on His Majesty's Brig, *Ernest*, as a midshipman, transporting troops before the battle of Waterloo. During this while, his interest in the theatre was evidenced by the fact that he has left somewhere an early and vivid impression of the acting of Edmund Kean. It is said that he organized theatricals on board ship, developing a passion for amateur theatricals which was later to be satisfied when he joined with Tenniel, Dickens, and Mark Lemon in their amateur ventures. This probably inspired Jerrold to play-writing. He was only eighteen years old when his first piece for the stage was produced, on April 30, 1821. It was called "More Frightened Than Hurt", having previously borne the title of "The Duellists."

In the words of Blanchard Jerrold, it must be remembered that:

> This was the time when Scott was in the ascendancy, Shelley was talking radicalism, Charles Lamb was middle-aged, Wordsworth and Coleridge at work, Byron in debt, Cobbett politically strong, Keats struggling for his own.

One can see, therefore, that Douglas Jerrold lived when there was beginning to be a distinct cleavage between old forces and the new. His influences were the same as those which shaped Thackeray and Dickens. The events of his early life point to the reasons why he was interested in the nautical drama. By 1827, he had received an initial apprenticeship in the writing of dramas, by doing hack work for Davidge, of the Coburg Theatre, at £5 a week. It was at this time that Elliston, the admired actor of Charles Lamb, leaving Drury Lane Theatre as manager, took over the Surrey, and to him Jerrold offered the manuscript of "Black-ey'd Susan; or, All in the Downs", which was immediately accepted, and produced on Whit Monday, June 8, 1829, when the author was only twenty-six.

It brought a fortune to Elliston and to T. P. Cooke, who created the part of *William*, but it brought a bare pittance to the author, in accordance with the custom of the day. It was described as a domestic drama, and was characterized by prodigality of scenes and by quietness and simplicity of situation. The pathos of the piece also was of the kind which, however stereotyped and artificial in its quality, would retain the power to appeal to the sentimental in all audiences. In other words, as Clement Scott said, many years after:

> The human contrasts used by Jerrold in this play, the lights and shadows of joy and sorrow, the domestic struggles and passions are of such character as never can lose their power.

On the first night the play was not a great success. This was attributed to the fact that it was a hot evening, and the audience was noisy in consequence. Blanchard Jerrold says:

> Now and then, in a lull, the seeds of wit intrusted by the author to the gardener (Mr. Buckstone), were loudly appreciated; but the early scenes of *Susan's* "heart-rending woe" could not appease the clamour. By and by came the clever dénouement when, just previously to the execution, the *Captain* enters with a document proving *William* to have been discharged when he committed the offence. The attentive few applauded so loudly as to silence the noisy audience. They listened, and caught up the capitally-managed incident. The effect was startling and electrical. The whole audience leaped with joy, and rushed into frantic enthusiasm.

Success led T. P. Cooke to reach out for a monopoly of nautical characters, so tremendous was his personal triumph. It likewise tempted Jerrold to try his hand at writing another play dealing with the navy, and called "Mutiny at the Nore." It was played in 1830. By this time Jerrold had reached an independent position where, instead of doing hack work, he could make his own terms.

However much Charles Dickens may have travestied "Black-ey'd Susan", he was one of those to feel the power of *William* in the hands of Cooke, to whom he wrote:

> It was so fresh and vigorous, so manly and gallant, that I felt as if it splashed against my theatre-heated face along with the spray of the breezy sea.

The stage history of the "Black-ey'd Susan" is fully given in W. Davenport Adams's "A Dictionary of the Drama."

The play has been burlesqued a number of times, once by Sims and Pettit, and another time by Burnand, as Adams notes. The most flagrant example of rewriting

took place when Mr. and Mrs. Kendal appeared in a desecration called "William and Susan", and prepared by the dramatist, W. G. Wills. This was given during the régime of the Kendals and Hare at the St. James's Theatre — a régime ushered in by Tennyson's "The Falcon" in the fall of 1879.

Dutton Cook, reviewing this revival, which was given in October, 1880, wrote:

> Wills . . . has, in fact, totally sunk and destroyed two out of Douglas Jerrold's three acts.

This was done, so it was stated, with the consent of Douglas Jerrold's son, even though the son may not have known how distorted Wills would make his father's comedy.

> After all, [writes Cook] Jerrold's "Black-ey'd Susan", if a little old-fashioned, is not such a very obsolete work. It is a picture — somewhat crudely coloured, it may be — of a past epoch; it is constructed after a straggling fashion, and includes many of those changes of scene — those sudden meetings and partings of "flats" — which modern stage-managers deprecate and eschew. But Jerrold never wrote coarsely or vulgarly: he was essentially an author of refinement; and there is nothing in any of his plays that need to be judged wounding to the susceptibilities even of Miss Podsnap and her class.

All this while, Jerrold was winning a reputation for himself by his writing in other directions, but for a time his dramatic ventures occupied most of his energies. He wrote for the *Athenæum*, the *Morning Herald*, the *Monthly Magazine*, and also for the famous *Blackwood's*. When some of his writings were gathered in three volumes, called "Men of Character", and published in 1838, they carried illustrations by Thackeray.

Punch was established in 1841, and, in issue Number 2, Douglas Jerrold made his first contribution, September 13, 1841. Thereafter, he was continually identified with this representative weekly, writing for it "Punch's Letters to his Son", "Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures", and other famous series. Not content with writing for these magazines, he was connected with publishing ventures of his own. In 1843, he contributed to *The Illuminated Magazine*, in 1845 to *The Douglas Jerrold Magazine*, and in 1845 to the *Douglas Jerrold Weekly Newspaper*. He was very prolific, writing continually and lengthily. Up to the time of his death, he edited *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, preparing the chief leaders. On June 8, 1857, Douglas Jerrold died, and was buried at Norwood Cemetery, — Charles Dickens, Thackeray, Monckton Milnes, and John Forster being among his pallbearers.

Leigh Hunt once said of Jerrold that even though his wit may have had the sting of the bee, his heart possessed the sweetness of honey; and the testimony of his friends was of the kindliest sort. Like his contemporaries, he came in for a great deal of censure from Macready, the actor, for whom he wrote several pieces. Macready's over-seriousness regarding his own position never allowed him, for a moment, to enjoy any of the pleasantries perpetrated by Jerrold. We find him in his "Diary", on September 6, 1842, resenting a reference to himself in *Punch*,

> by a set of low-mannered, ignorant, and ill-conditioned men, who rejoice in the miserable Jerrold as their captain; they abuse all they envy.

To such an extent did Macready's sensitiveness prejudice him that, even when he attended private theatricals conducted by Lemon and Dickens, he could see

nothing in Jerrold's poor attempts, however much he might consider the farce between the other actors "broad and laughable." Yet he was continually dining with Jerrold, in company with Dickens, Forster, Lemon and Leech, and often found himself much chagrined over the unwisdom of his prejudices. For instance, at one meeting, he was introduced to À Beckett, and in his entry, October 13, 1846, he said:

> I remember when I detested the name of this Mr. À Beckett, whom I did not know, because he wrote, or was said to have written, disparagingly of me in the *Figaro!* I like him, knowing him, very much.

His impressions of a dinner, given by Jerrold at Putney Heath, show how hasty he was, moved by the temper of the moment. For instance, he considered Leigh Hunt

> *particularly disagreeable.* Disputative and tedious — affecting great benevolence and arguing most malevolently. He is a good-tempered coxcomb — but coxcomb heart and soul — not meaning harm to any, but a coxcomb.

The prolific Jerrold is nowhere better seen than in the delightful history of *Punch*, written by Spielmann, wherein it is estimated that the editors of *Punch* contributed to the Victorian stage no less than five hundred plays. In other words, all of the burlesques and travesties that found their way on the stage of the time were reflective of the burlesque and travesty spirits in *Punch's* cartoons, reflective of passing events.

Spielmann writes regarding Jerrold's association with the English comic weekly:

> No man ever gained so much from the paper in which he worked. He simply frolicked in its pages, that fitted his talent as accurately as his genius suited the times in which he lived. It is doubtful whether he would make the same mark in it were he alive to-day; he would have to seek another publication and another public, or else adopt an utter change of tone. But in those lively times, when, obeying the summons addressed to him in Boulogne, he sent his first political paper — beginning characteristically with the introduction of Peel, in time for the second number — he gave his powers full play. And his sparkle was the brighter for its setting and its surroundings. His wit was for the most part caustic and saturnine, and in no other journal could it have so completely identified itself with the *ensemble* of tone. Without *Punch*, Jerrold would certainly not have been so distinguished a man; yet he somewhere says in one of his works, with a touch of ingratitude: "If you'd pass for somebody you must sneer at a play, but idolize *Punch*" — as though this were the height of priggishness. He was a keen judge of things, and might have held that view; but it was hardly for him, of all men, to publish it.

Even toward the end of his life, when rheumatic pains made it an effort for him to write, Jerrold maintained his same jocose manner.

As we have intimated, at the time of his death, his friends described him with loving touches of appreciation. Somewhere Dickens writes:

> He was one of the gentlest and most affectionate of men. I remember very well that when I first saw him, in about the year 1835, when I went into his

> sick room in Thistle Grove, Brompton, and found him propped up in a great chair, bright-eyed, and quick, and eager in spirit, but very lame in body, he gave me an impression of tenderness. . . . In the company of children and young people he was particularly happy. . . . He never was so gay, so sweet-tempered, so pleasing, and so pleased as then. Among my own children I have observed this many and many a time.

So much of a valued friend was Dickens to Jerrold that the latter could not bear any very long estrangement. A misunderstanding arising between them once, it is recorded that Jerrold met Dickens at a Club dining-room:

> "For God's sake, let us be friends again!" exclaimed Jerrold. "A life's not long enough for this."

Another impression of Jerrold tempers the satirical portrait given by so many. Edmund Yates, the actor, has written:

> I had often been in his company, and had heard him flash forth the biting epigram and quick repartee for which, in our day, he has had no rival. A small, delicately-formed bent man, with long grey hair combed back from his forehead, with grey eyes deep set under penthouse brows, and a way, just as the inspiration seized him, of dangling a double eyeglass, which hung round his neck by a broad black ribbon: a kindly man for all his bitter tongue . . . soft and easy with women and children.

It was this lovableness of the man which made so many run to the rescue of his family, who, at his death, were left in straitened circumstances. Wilkie Collins, Forster, Thackeray, — all of them tried to see what they could do to raise money in his memory. Thackeray, at the request of Dickens, gave his lecture, "Week-day Preachers"; Forster wanted a revival of "The Rent Day" and "Black-ey'd Susan." The plans developed and were put through with success.

Jerrold's loss was a genuine grief to every one. No better illustration of the way in which friendship persisted, in spite of constant aggravation, can be found than in the association of Thackeray and Douglas Jerrold, who were members of the same clubs, who dined at the same supper-rooms, and who had respect for each other, even though it is supposed that Jerrold never could quite understand Thackeray. Unfortunately, none of that wit for which he was famous crept into "Black-ey'd Susan", which is more illustrative of the gentleness and domesticity of Jerrold than of his humorous point-of-view regarding the weaknesses of the age in which he lived.

BLACK-EY'D SUSAN;

OR,

"ALL IN THE DOWNS"

A NAUTICAL AND DOMESTIC DRAMA—IN TWO ACTS

By DOUGLAS JERROLD

[London Lacy edition followed.]

CASTS OF "BLACK-EY'D SUSAN" AT FIRST PRODUCTIONS IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

	Royal Surrey, London, June 8, 1829	*Tremont, Boston,* 1838
WILLIAM	Mr. T. P. Cooke	Mr. T. Cline
CAPT. CROSSTREE	Mr. Forrester	Mr. J. E. Murdock
RAKER	Mr. Warwick	Mr. P. C. Cunningham
HATCHET	Mr. Yardley	Mr. W. H. Curtis
DOGGRASS	Mr. Dibdin Pitt	Mr. W. F. Johnson
ADMIRAL	Mr. Gough	Mr. J. G. Gilbert
JACOB TWIG	Mr. Rogers	Mr. D. Whiting
GNATBRAIN	Mr. Buckstone	Mr. G. H. Andrews
BLUE PETER	Mr. Williamson	———
SEAWEED	Mr. Asbury	Mr. B. L. Benson
QUID	Mr. Lee	Mr. Powell
LIEUT. PIKE	Mr. Hicks	Mr. Seaver
YARN	Mr. Dowsing	———
PLOUGHSHARE	Mr. Webb	———
BLACK-EY'D SUSAN	Miss Scott	Mrs. G. H. Barrett
DOLLY MAYFLOWER	Mrs. Vale	Miss A. Fisher

Sailors, Midshipmen, Officers, etc.

The Music throughout this Piece is chiefly Selections from Dibdin's Naval Airs.

BLACK-EY'D SUSAN

ACT I

SCENE FIRST. — *A View of the Country.*

[*Enter* DOGGRASS *and* GNATBRAIN]

DOGGRASS. Tut! if you are inclined to preach, here is a mile-stone — I'll leave you in its company.

GNATBRAIN. Ay, it's all very well — very well; but you have broken poor Susan's heart, and as for William —

DOGGRASS. What of him?

GNATBRAIN. The sharks of him, for what you care. Didn't you make him turn a sailor, and leave his young wife, the little, delicate black-ey'd Susan, that pretty piece of soft-speaking womanhood, your niece? Now say, haven't you qualms? On a winter's night, now, when the snow is drifting at your door, what do you do?

DOGGRASS. Shut it.

GNATBRAIN. And what, when you hear the wind blowing at your chimney corner?

DOGGRASS. Get closer to it.

GNATBRAIN. What, when in your bed, you turn up one side at the thunder?

DOGGRASS. Turn round on the other. Will you go on with your catechism?

GNATBRAIN. No, I'd rather go and talk to the echoes. A fair day to you, Master Doggrass! If your conscience —

DOGGRASS. Conscience! Phoo! my conscience sleeps well enough.

GNATBRAIN. Sleeps! Don't wake it then — it might alarm you.

DOGGRASS. One word with you, — no more of your advice: I go about like a surly bull, and you a gadfly buzzing around me. From this moment throw off the part of counsellor.

GNATBRAIN. But don't you see? —

DOGGRASS. Don't you see these trees growing about us?

GNATBRAIN. Very well.

DOGGRASS. If a cudgel was cut from them for every knave who busies himself in the business of others — don't you think it would mightily open the prospect?

GNATBRAIN. Perhaps it might: and don't you think that if every hard-hearted, selfish rascal that destroys the happiness of others, were strung up to the boughs before they were cut for cudgels, don't you think that instead of opening the prospect, it would mightily darken it?

DOGGRASS. I have given you warning — take heed! take heed! and with this counsel, I give you a good day. [*Exit*]

GNATBRAIN. Ay, it's the only thing good you can give; and that only good, because it's not your own. That rascal has no more heart than a bagpipe! One could sooner make Dover Cliffs dance a reel to a penny whistle, than move him with words of pity or distress. No matter, let the old dog bark; his teeth will not last forever — and I yet hope to see the day when poor black-ey'd Susan, and the jovial sailor, William, may defy the surly cur that now divides them. [*Exit*]

[*Enter* RAKER *and* HATCHET]

RAKER. A plague on him! — if I thought he meant us foul play, —

HATCHET. Not he — 'twas a mistake.

RAKER. Aye, a mistake that nearly threw us into the hands of the Philistines. But I know why you have ever a good word for this same Doggrass.

HATCHET. Know! you know as much as the weathercock that answers every wind, yet cannot tell the point from which it blows. And what do you know?

RAKER. I know that Mrs. Susan, Doggrass's niece, has two black eyes.

HATCHET. Umph! your knowledge proves that, though a fool, you are not yet blind.

RAKER. Civil words, Master Hatchet.

HATCHET. What! be you as dumb as the figure-head of the *Starling;* as soft and as yielding as teazed oakum — let my little finger be your helm, and see you answer it. Who am I?

RAKER. Tom Hatchet, the smuggler of Deal; Captain of the *Redbreast*, and trading partner with old Doggrass.

HATCHET. Thank'ee: now I'll tell you what you are — Bill Raker, first mate of the *Redbreast*, as great a rogue as ever died at the fore-yard, and consequently —

RAKER. The best person to go on your errands.

HATCHET. Just so; see you do them well. Now, bear up, whilst I pour a broadside of intelligence into you. I'm going to be married.

RAKER. You generally are at every port you put into.

HATCHET. Belay your jokes. To whom do you think? — you can't guess?

RAKER. No. It isn't to the last port-admiral's widow? Perhaps to big Betsy, the bumboat woman.

HATCHET. No, you albatross, — to Susan — black-ey'd Susan.

RAKER. Steady there — steady! — I'm no younker. The lass is married already.

HATCHET. Aye, she had a husband. [*Significantly*]

RAKER. What! — why no!

HATCHET. How blows the wind now — what do you stare at? He's dead.

RAKER. William dead! Then there's not so fine, so noble, so taut-rigged a fellow in His Majesty's navy. Poor lad — poor lad!

HATCHET. Turning whimperer?

RAKER. Why not? Such news would make a mermaid cry in the middle of her singing.

HATCHET. Avast with your salt water! William is not dead: what think you now?

RAKER. That there is one more brave fellow in the world and one more liar.

HATCHET. Ha! —

RAKER. Slack your fore-sheet, Captain Hatchet; if you must spin such galley yarns, let it be to the marines, or the landlady of the Ship; but see that you don't again bring tears into an old sailor's eyes, and laugh at him for hoisting and answering pendant to signals of distress. You marry Susan? Now belay, belay the joke.

HATCHET. Listen to my story: it shall be short — short as a marlinspike. I must marry Susan: she knows not you — you must swear that you were her husband's shipmate — that you saw him drowned. Susan now lives with old Dame Hatley — she has no other home; and if she refuse, Doggrass will seize for long arrears of rent, on the old woman's goods, and turn Susan adrift; then the girl has no chance left but to marry. Is it not a good scheme?

RAKER. Had the devil been purser, he could not have made a better.

HATCHET. I'm going now to Doggrass, to see further about it; meantime, do you think of the part you are to play, and I'll think how I can best reward you. [*Exit*]

RAKER. I must certainly look a scoundrel. There must be an invitation in my figure-head to all sorts of wickedness, else Captain Hatchet could never have offered such dirty work to an old sailor. I must look a villain, and that's the truth. Well, there is no help for an ugly countenance; but if my face be ill-favoured, I'll take care to keep my heart of the right colour: like the Dolphin tap, if I hang out a badly-painted sign-post, I'll see and keep good cheer within. [*Exit*]

SCENE SECOND. — DAME HATLEY'S *Cottage.* SUSAN *is heard without, singing a verse of "Black-ey'd Susan."*

[*Enter* SUSAN]

SUSAN. Twelve long, tedious months have passed, and no, no tidings of William. Shame upon the unkind hearts that parted us — that sent my dear husband to dare the perils of the ocean, and made me a pining, miserable creature! Oh, the pangs, the dreadful pangs that tear the sailor's wife, as, wakeful on her tear-wet pillow, she lists and trembles at the roaring sea!

[*Enter* GNATBRAIN, *at the cottage door*]

GNATBRAIN. There she is, like a caged nightingale, singing her heart out against her prison-bars — for this cottage is little better than a gaol to her. Susan!

SUSAN. Gnatbrain!

GNATBRAIN. In faith, Susan, if sorrow makes such sweet music, may I

never turn skylark, but always remain a goose.

SUSAN. Have you seen my uncle?

GNATBRAIN. Oh, yes!

SUSAN. Will he show any kindness?

GNATBRAIN. I cannot tell. Did you ever see gooseberries grow upon a cabbage-stump? You have flowers from an aloe-tree, if you wait a hundred years.

SUSAN. He has threatened to distress the good dame.

GNATBRAIN. Ay, for the rent. Oh, Susan, I would I were your landlord! I should think myself well paid if you would allow me every quarter-day to put my ear to the key-hole, and listen to one of your prettiest ditties. Why, for such payment, were I your landlord, I'd find you in board, washing, and lodging, and the use of a gig on Sundays. I wish I — But la! what's the use of my wishing? I'm nobody but half gardener, half waterman — a kind of alligator, that gets his breakfast from the shore, and his dinner from the sea — a — [DOGGRASS *passes window*]

SUSAN. Oh, begone! I see Mr. Doggrass; if he find you here —

GNATBRAIN. He must not; here's a cupboard — I'm afraid there's plenty of room in it.

SUSAN. No, no, I would not for the world — there is no occasion — meet him.

GNATBRAIN. Not I, for quiet's sake. We never meet but, like gunpowder and fire, there is an explosion. This will do. [*Goes into the closet*]

[*Enter* DOGGRASS]

DOGGRASS. Now, Susan, you know my business — I say, you know my business. I come for money.

SUSAN. I have none, sir.

DOGGRASS. A pretty answer, truly. Are people to let their houses to beggars?

SUSAN. Beggars! Sir, I am your brother's orphan child.

DOGGRASS. I am sorry for it. I wish he were alive to pay for you. And where is your husband?

SUSAN. Do you ask where he is? I am poor, sir — poor and unprotected; do not, as you have children of your own, do not insult me. [*Weeps*]

DOGGRASS. Ay, this is to let houses to women; if the tax-gatherers were to be paid with crying, why, nobody would roar more lustily than myself; let a man ask for his rent, and you pull out your pocket-handkerchief. Where's Dame Hatley?

SUSAN. In the next room — ill, very ill.

DOGGRASS. An excuse to avoid me; she shall not. [*Going*]

SUSAN. You will not enter!

DOGGRASS. Who shall stop me?

SUSAN. If heaven give me power, I! Uncle, the old woman is sick — I fear dangerously. Her spirit, weakened by late misfortune, flickers, like a dying light. Your sudden appearance might make all dark. Uncle — landlord! would you have murder on your soul?

DOGGRASS. Murder?

SUSAN. Yes; though such may not be the common word, hearts are daily crushed, spirits broken — whilst he who slays, destroys in safety.

DOGGRASS. Can Dame Hatley pay me the money?

SUSAN. No.

DOGGRASS. Then she shall to prison.

SUSAN. She will die there.

DOGGRASS. Well?

SUSAN. Would you make the old woman close her eyes in a gaol?

DOGGRASS. I have no time to hear sentiment. Mrs. Hatley has no money — you have none. Well, though she doesn't merit lenity of me, I'll not be harsh with her.

SUSAN. I thought you could not.

DOGGRASS. I'll just take whatever may be in the house, and put up with the rest of the loss.

[*Enter* DOLLY MAYFLOWER]

DOLLY. So, Mr. Doggrass, this is how you behave to unfortunate folks — coming and selling them up, and turning them out. Is this your feeling for the poor?

DOGGRASS. Feeling! I pay the rates. What business have you here? Go to your spinning.

DOLLY. Spinning! if it were to spin a certain wicked old man a halter, I'd never work faster. Ugh! I always thought you very ugly, but now you look hideous.

SUSAN. Peace, good Dolly.

DOLLY. Peace! Oh, you are too quiet — too gentle! Take example by me: I only wish he'd come to sell me up, that's all. [DOGGRASS *goes to door*] Oh, I know who you are looking after — your man, Jacob Twig; he hops after you on your dirty work, like a tomtit after a jackdaw — I saw him leering in

at the door. I wish my dear Gnatbrain was here. Oh, Susan, I wish he was here; he's one of the best, most constant of lovers — he'd befriend you for my sake.

DOGGRASS [*goes to the door*]. Jacob!

[*Enter* JACOB TWIG. *He has a memorandum book in his hand, a pen in his ear, and an ink-bottle in the buttonhole of his coat.*]

You know your business.

JACOB. What, here, master? What, at old Dame Hatley's?

DOLLY. To be sure, good Jacob; if your master had a tree, and but one squirrel lived in it, he'd take its nuts, sooner than allow it lodging gratis.

SUSAN. Uncle, have compassion — wait but another week — a day.

DOGGRASS. Not an hour — a minute. Jacob, do your duty. Now begin; put down everything you see in the cottage.

JACOB. Master, hadn't you better wait a little? Perhaps the Dame can find friends. [DOGGRASS *is imperative*] Well, here goes: I'll first begin with the cupboard.

SUSAN [*stopping him*]. No, let me entreat you do not. Come this way, if you are still determined.

DOGGRASS. Eh! why that way? why not with the cupboard? I suspect —

JACOB. And now, so do I.

DOLLY. You suspect! I dare say, suspicion is all your brain can manage. What should you suspect — a thing that never had a thought deeper than a mug of ale? You suspect Susan! Why, we shall have the crows suspecting the lilies.

JACOB. You say so, do you? Now, I'll show you my consequence. I'll put everything down, master, and begin with the cupboard. Ah! it's fast: I'll have it open — and I'll put the first thing down.

[*Pulls open the door, when* GNATBRAIN *knocks* JACOB *down with rolling-pin, and stands in attitude.* — SUSAN *in corner.* — DOLLY *in surprise.* — DOGGRASS *exulting*]

GNATBRAIN. No, I'll put the first thing down.

DOLLY. Gnatbrain! Oh, Susan, Susan!

DOGGRASS. Oh, oh! we shall have the crows suspecting the lilies! Pretty flower! how it hangs its head! Go on with your duty, Jacob; put down everything in the house.

GNATBRAIN. Do, Jacob; and begin with "one broken head" — then, one stony-hearted landlord — one innocent young woman — ditto, jealous — one man tolerably honest — and one somewhat damaged.

JACOB. I'll have you up before justices — you have broken my crown.

GNATBRAIN. Broken your crown! Jacob, Jacob, it was cracked before!

JACOB. How do you know that?

GNATBRAIN. By the ring of it, Jacob — by the ring: I never heard such a bit of Brummagem in my life.

DOGGRASS [*to* SUSAN]. Well, Susan, it is sometimes convenient, is it not, for a husband to be at sea?

SUSAN. Sir, scorn has no word, — contempt no voice to speak my loathing of your insinuations. Take, sir, all that is here; satisfy your avarice; but dare not indulge your malice at the cost of one who has now nothing left her in her misery but the sweet consciousness of virtue. [*Exit*]

DOGGRASS. The way with all women when they are found out, is it not, Mrs. Dolly?

DOLLY. I can't tell, sir; I never was found out.

DOGGRASS. Ay, you are lucky.

DOLLY. Yes — we don't meet often. But as for you, Mr. Gnatbrain —

GNATBRAIN. Now, no insinuations. I wish I could remember what Susan said about virtue: it would apply to my case admirably. Nothing like a sentiment to stop accusation — one may apply it to a bleeding reputation, as barbers do cobwebs to a wound.

DOGGRASS. Jacob, do you stay here — see that nothing of the least value leaves the house.

GNATBRAIN. In that case, Jacob, you may let your master go out.

DOGGRASS. Some day, my friend, I shall be a match for you. [*Exit*]

GNATBRAIN. Perhaps so, but one of us must change greatly to make us pairs. [GNATBRAIN *then pursues* JACOB *into corner*] Jacob, I never look upon your little carcase, but it puts me in mind of a pocket edition of the Newgate Calendar — a neat Old Bailey duodecimo. You are a most villanous-looking rascal — an epitome of a noted highwayman.

JACOB. What!

GNATBRAIN. True as the light.

You have a most Tyburnlike physiognomy: there's Turpin in the curl of your upper lip — Jack Sheppard in the under one — your nose is Jerry Abershaw himself — Duval and Barrington are your eyes — and as for your chin, why Sixteen-String Jack lives again in it. [GNATBRAIN *goes to window, affecting to see what is passing outside*] Eh! well done — excellent! there's all the neighbours getting the furniture out the garden window.

JACOB. Is there? It's against the law. I'm his Majesty's officer, and I'll be among them in a whistle.

[JACOB *rushes off;* GNATBRAIN *instantly bolts door*]

GNATBRAIN. A bailiff, like a snowstorm, is always best on the outside. Now Dolly, sweet Dolly Mayflower, won't you look at me? Won't you be the summer cabbage of my heart, and let me cultivate you?

DOLLY. Don't talk to me, sir! — the cupboard, sir — the cupboard.

GNATBRAIN. Hear my defence. On my word, I had not the least idea that you would have found me, or the cupboard is the last place I should have gone into.

DOLLY. It's no matter; there's Mr. James Rattlin, boatswain's mate of the *Bellerophon* —

GNATBRAIN. What! you wouldn't marry a sailor?

DOLLY. And why not?

GNATBRAIN. Your natural timidity wouldn't allow you.

DOLLY. My timidity?

GNATBRAIN. Yes; you wouldn't like to be left alone o'nights. Your husband would be at sea for six months out of the twelve; there would be a wintry prospect for you.

DOLLY. But he would be at home the other six months — and there's summer, sir.

GNATBRAIN. True, but when you can have summer all the year round, don't you think it more to your advantage?

DOLLY. No — for, if it always shone, we should never really enjoy fine weather.

GNATBRAIN. Oh, my dear, when we are married, we'll get up a thunderstorm or two, depend upon it. But come, Dolly, your heart is too good, your head too clear, to nourish idle suspicion. Let us go and see poor Susan. There is real calamity enough in our every-day paths; we need not add to it by our idle follies. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE THIRD. — *A View of the Country.*

[*Enter* HATCHET]

HATCHET. Doggrass has made the seizure by this time. Now I'll step in, pay the money, and thus buy the gratitude of Susan, before I tell her the story of her husband's death.

[*Enter* JACOB, *running*]

Bring up there, my young skiff. Whither bound?

JACOB. I'm in a hurry.

HATCHET. Bring up, I say, or I'll spoil your figurehead. [*Lifting his cudgel*]

JACOB. Do you know who I am?

HATCHET. No; what are you, my young flying-fish?

JACOB. I'm a bailiff — aren't you frightened? I serve Mr. Doggrass.

HATCHET. The very craft I was sailing after. You have been to Susan's — Black-ey'd Susan's, as she's called?

JACOB. How do you know that?

HATCHET. You have made a seizure there?

JACOB. Right again.

HATCHET. Have secured everything?

JACOB. Wrong. I had made as pretty a piece of business of it as any of my craft — a very pretty stroke of handiwork; but somehow or the other —

HATCHET. You frighten me. Nobody paid the money, I hope?

JACOB. Oh, don't be alarmed at that; no, but somehow or the other, quite by a mistake, when I thought I was in possession, I found myself on the wrong side of the house. And, here comes Susan.

[*Enter* SUSAN]

JACOB. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Mrs. Susan, to make one to cozen so innocent a little bailiff as myself — aren't you ashamed of yourself?

HATCHET [*throwing Jacob over to left*] Stand o' one side! What, in trouble, my pretty Susan? What, have the land-sharks got aboard of the cottage? Come, cheer up.

SUSAN. What, do you indeed pity me? This is kind, and, from a stranger, unexpected.

HATCHET. Not such a stranger as you may think.

SUSAN. No.

HATCHET. No, I know your husband — sailed with him.

SUSAN. You did! Oh, tell me everything!

HATCHET. All in good time. [*To* JACOB] What do you want here — sticking like a barnacle to a ship's copper?

[*Strikes* JACOB *with cudgel*]

JACOB. Want! Oh, here comes my master — he'll tell you what I want. I'll leave you with him — he'll answer all questions.

[*Exit, but returns, and strikes* HATCHET *with book, and runs off*]

[*Enter* DOGGRASS]

DOGGRASS. So, madam, you must show contempt to a king's officer — put a servant of the law out of doors!

HATCHET. Steady there! none of your overhauling. What do you want with the young woman?

DOGGRASS. What's that to you?

SUSAN. Oh, pray don't quarrel on my account — do not, I entreat you!

HATCHET [*aside*]. I'll swagger a little. Quarrel, my dear — I'd fight yard-arm to yard-arm for you — go on a boarding party, cut out, row under a battery, or fight in a rocket-boat; anything for the pretty black-ey'd Susan.

DOGGRASS. Well, as you'll do all this, perhaps you'll pay the money she owes.

HATCHET. That will I, though it were the last shot in my locker.

SUSAN. No, no, there is no occasion; I would not have it for the world.

DOGGRASS. You wouldn't? I would — but don't be afraid — he'll talk, but he'll be long ere he pays twelve pounds seventeen and sixpence for you, black-ey'd and pretty as you are.

HATCHET. See how little you know of a sailor; there's thirteen pounds — I'm not much of an accountant, but it strikes me that that will pay your little bill, and just leave a dirty two-and-sixpence for young Jibboom, the bailiff.

SUSAN. Oh, my good, kind friend — this generosity — my thanks, my prayers!

HATCHET. Not a word, not a word — good-bye.

SUSAN. Yet, do not leave me; you said you knew my husband — had a tale to tell of him.

HATCHET. Yes, but not now; to-morrow. If I have done anything to oblige you, let me ask the delay. Besides, then I will bring one with me who can tell you more of William than myself; meantime, farewell. [*Aside*] She's softened. A woman is like sealing-wax — only melt her, and she will take what form you please. I've bought her heart with the chink, and to-morrow will secure it. [*Exit*]

SUSAN. Wait till to-morrow! Alas! there is no remedy but patience; yet, spite of myself, I feel forebodings which I know 'tis weakness to indulge.

DOGGRASS. I suppose, Mrs. Susan, as the case at present stands, neither you nor the old dame will now think of leaving the cottage?

SUSAN. Indeed, landlord, we shall.

DOGGRASS. Landlord! why not uncle? it is a much better word.

SUSAN. It might have been, but your unkindness has taught me to forget it.

DOGGRASS. Now, hear reason [*she turns from him*]. Well, to be sure, a plain-spoken man can't expect it from one of your sex, so I'll leave you. You'll think again about the cottage? it has a pretty situation, and as for the rent, why, as one may say, it's a mere nothing. [*Exit*]

SUSAN. Cruel man! Oh, William! when, when will you return to your almost heartbroken Susan? Winds, blow prosperously, be tranquil, seas, and bring my husband to my longing eyes. [*Exit*]

SCENE FOURTH. — *A View of the Downs. — The fleet at anchor.*

[*Enter* JACOB TWIG]

JACOB. After all, I don't much like this trade of bailiff. I've a great mind to give it up, go back to my native Dover again, and turn ploughman. [*Three cheers*] Holloa! the boats are putting off from the ships. Deal will be crowded again; there will be no getting a sweetheart for these six months. [*Music. — Three cheers*]

[*Enter* SEAWEED, BLUE PETER, SAILORS, *and* WILLIAM]

WILLIAM. Huzza! huzza! my noble fellows, my heart jumps like a dolphin — my head turns round like a capstern;

I feel as if I were driving before the gale of pleasure for the haven of joy.

SEAWEED. But I say, William, there's nobody here to meet us.

WILLIAM. Why, no! that is, you see, because we dropped anchor afore the poor things had turned out of their hammocks. Ah! if my Susan knew who was here, she'd soon lash and carry, roused up by the whistle of that young boatswain's mate, Cupid, piping in her heart. Holloa! what craft is this? Cutter, ahoy! — what ship?

JACOB [*taking off his hat*]. My name is Jacob Twig.

WILLIAM. You needn't bring to, under bare poles — cover your truck, and up with your answering pendant. Come, clear your signal halyards, and hoist away. What service?

JACOB. I'm in the law.

WILLIAM. Umph! belongs to the rocket boats. May my pockets be scuttled, if I didn't think so! 'Tis Beelzebub's ship, the Law! she's neither privateer, bomb-ship, nor letter-o-mark; she's built of green timber, manned with lob-lolly boys and marines; provisioned with mouldy biscuit and bilge-water, and fires nothing but red-hot shot: there's no grappling with or boarding her. She always sails best in a storm, and founders in fair weather. I'd sooner be sent adrift in the North Sea, in a butter cask, with a 'bacco-box for my store-room, than sail in that devil's craft, the Law. My young grampus, I should like to have the mast-heading of you in a stiff north-wester. [*Threatening him*]

SEAWEED. Avast there, messmate! don't rake the cock-boat fore and aft.

JACOB [*corner*]. Don't cock the rake-boat fore and aft. [*Frightened*]

WILLIAM. Why, yes, I know it's throwing away powder and shot to sink cockle-shells with forty-two-pounders. But warn't it the lawyers that turned me and Susan out of our stowage? Why, I'd as soon had met one of Mother Carey's Chickens, as — eh! [*Looking out*] There's a fleet bearing down.

PETER. A fleet? — Ay, and as smart as a seventy-four on the King's birth-day.

WILLIAM. A little more to larboard, messmate. [WILLIAM *throws* JACOB *to his right, the sailors pass him from one to the other till he is off*] There's my Susan! Now pipe all hands for a royal salute; there she is, schooner-rigged. I'd swear to her canvas from a whole fleet. Now she makes more sail! — outs with her studding-booms — mounts her royals, moon-rakers and sky-scrapers; now she lies to it! — now! — now! — eh? May I be put on six-water grog for a lubber.

PETER. What's the matter?

WILLIAM. 'Tisn't she — 'tisn't my craft.

[*Music. — Enter women, who welcome all the sailors. — Every one, except* WILLIAM, *is met by a female. — He looks anxiously at every one. — All go off except* WILLIAM]

What! and am I left alone in the doctor's list, whilst all the crew are engaging! I know I look as lubberly as a Chinese junk under a jewry mast. I'm afraid to throw out a signal — my heart knocks against my timbers, like a jolly-boat in a breeze, alongside a seventy-four. Damn it, I feel as if half of me was wintering in the Baltic, and the other half stationed in Jamaica.

[*Enter* PLOUGHSHARE. — *Music*]

It's no use, I must ask for despatches. Damn it, there can be no black seal to them! Messmate!

PLOUGHSHARE. Now, friend. [*Comes down*]

WILLIAM. Give us your grappling-iron! Mayhap you don't know me!

PLOUGHSHARE. No.

WILLIAM. Well, that's hard to a sailor, come to his native place. We have ploughed many an acre together in Farmer Sparrow's ground.

PLOUGHSHARE. What — William! William that married Susan!

WILLIAM. Avast there! hang it — that name, spoke by another, has brought the salt water up; I can feel one tear standing in either eye like a marine at each gangway: but come, let's send them below. [*Wipes his eyes*] Now, don't pay away your line till I pipe. I have been three years at sea; all that time I have heard but once from Susan — she has been to me a main-stay in all weathers. I have been piped up, — roused from my hammock, dreaming of her, — for the cold, black middle watch; I have walked the deck, the surf beating in my face, but Susan was at my side, and I did not feel it.

I have been reefing on the yards, in cold and darkness, when I could hardly see the hand of my next messmate; — but Susan's eyes were on me, and there was light. I have heard the boatswain pipe to quarters; — a voice in my heart whispered "Susan", and I strode like a lion. The first broadside was given; — shipmates, whose words were hardly off their lips, lay torn and mangled about me; — their groans were in my ears, and their blood hot on my face; — I whispered "Susan!" it was a word that seemed to turn the balls aside, and keep me safe. When land was cried from the mast-head, I seized the glass — my shipmates saw the cliffs of England — I, I could see but Susan! I leap upon the beach; my shipmates find hands to grasp and lips to press — I find not Susan's.

PLOUGHSHARE. Believe me —

WILLIAM. Avast there! if you must hoist the black flag — gently. Is she yet in commission? — Does she live?

PLOUGHSHARE. She does.

WILLIAM. Thank heaven! I'll go to church next Sunday, and you shall have a can of grog — eh! but your figurehead changes like a dying dolphin; she lives, but perhaps hove down in the port of sickness. No? what then, eh? — avast! not dead — not sick — yet — why, there's a galley-fire lighted up in my heart — there's not an R in her name?

PLOUGHSHARE. What do you mean?

WILLIAM. Mean! grape and canister! She's not run, — not shown false colours?

PLOUGHSHARE. No, no.

WILLIAM. I deserve a round dozen for the question. Damn it, none of your small arms; but open all your ports and give fire.

PLOUGHSHARE. Susan is well — is constant; but has been made to feel that poverty is too often punished for crime.

WILLIAM. What, short of ammunition to keep off the land-sharks? But her uncle?

PLOUGHSHARE. He has treated her very unkindly.

WILLIAM. I see it! damn it, I'll overhaul him — I'll bring him on his beam-ends. Heave a-head, shipmate! — Now for my dear Susan, and no quarters for her uncle.

[*Music. — Exeunt* PLOUGHSHARE *and* WILLIAM]

[*Enter* CAPTAIN CROSSTREE]

CROSSTREE. In faith that's the prettiest little vessel I ever saw in a long cruise. I threw out signals to her, but she wouldn't answer. Here comes the fellow that passed me whilst I was talking to her.

[*Enter* GNATBRAIN]

Shipmate, there is a dollar for you.

GNATBRAIN. Truly, sir, I would we had been messmates, you might then have made it ten shillings.

CROSSTREE. You passed me a few minutes since, when I was in company with a petticoat.

GNATBRAIN. Ay; it's no use, Captain; she's a tight little craft, and as faithful to all that is good as your ship to her helm.

CROSSTREE. What is her name? — Who is she?

GNATBRAIN. We simply call her Susan — Black-ey'd Susan. She is the wife of a sailor.

CROSSTREE. Ay, what, fond of the blue-jackets?

GNATBRAIN. Yes, so fond of the jacket, that she'll never look at your long coat. Good-day, Captain. [*Exit*]

CROSSTREE. The wife of a sailor! wife of a common seaman! why, she's fit for an admiral. I know it's wrong, but I will see her — and come what may, I must, and will possess her. [*Exit*]

SCENE FIFTH. — *Interior of* SUSAN'S *Cottage. — Same as Scene Second.*

[*Enter* WILLIAM *at door*]

WILLIAM. Well, here I am at last! I've come fifteen knots an hour, yet I felt as if I were driving astern all the time. So, this is poor Susan's berth — not aboard — out on liberty, and not come to the beach?

SUSAN [*without*]. Oh, say not so, for mercy's sake!

WILLIAM. Eh! that's she; — ha! and with two strange-rigged craft in convoy; I'll tack a bit, and — damn it, if there's foul play! chain-shot and bar-shot! I'll rake 'em fore and aft. [*Retires*]

[*Enter* SUSAN, HATCHET, *and* RAKER. — *Slow music*]

[*Aside*] What, hanging out signals of distress?

SUSAN. Oh, these are heavy tidings indeed!

HATCHET. Don't take on so, pretty Susan! If William is dead, there are husbands enough for so pretty a face as yours.

WILLIAM. Dead! may I never splice the mainbrace, if that swab don't want to get into my hammock. [HATCHET *approaches nearer to* SUSAN] Now, he's rowing alongside her with muffled oars, to cut her cable! — I'll tomahawk his rigging for him.

SUSAN. But is there no hope?

HATCHET. Hope! none. I tell you, Susan, this honest fellow was William's messmate; he saw him go down; — you didn't rightly hear him when he first told the story — tell it again, Tom. [RAKER *suddenly indicates his unwillingness*] Poor fellow! he was William's friend, and the story hurts him. I'll tell it you. You see, the ship had got upon the rocks, and it came on to blow great guns; her timbers opened, and she broke her back; — all her masts were overboard, and orders were given to take to the boats. William was in the jolly-boat: — well, she hadn't got the length of a boarding-pike from the wreck, when she shipped a sea, and down she went. William, and twelve other brave fellows, were in the water; — his shipmate here threw out a rope; — it was too late; William sunk, and was never seen more. His shipmate turned round and saw — [*During his speech,* RAKER *has moved into the corner of the stage, his back to* HATCHET, *as if unwilling to hear the story.* — WILLIAM, *by the conclusion of this speech, has placed himself between* HATCHET *and* SUSAN] Damnation!

SUSAN [*shrieking and throwing herself into* WILLIAM'S *arms*]. William!

WILLIAM. Damn it, I'm running over at the scuppers, or, you lubbers, I'd been aboard of you before this. What! hang out false signals to the petticoat? — May you both have the yellow flag over you, and go up in the smoke of the fore-castle. Bring-to a minute, and I'll be yard-arm and yard-arm with you. What, Susan, Susan! See, you swabs, how you've brought the white flag into her pretty figure-head. [SUSAN *revives; he relinquishes his hold of her*] Now, then, I'll make junk of one of you.

SUSAN. William! William! for heaven's sake! —

WILLIAM. Just one little bout, Susan, to see how I'd make small biscuit of 'em. You won't fight? Then take *that* to the paymaster, and ask him for the change. [*Strikes* HATCHET]

HATCHET. Struck! then here's one of us for old Davy!

[*Music. — Runs at* WILLIAM *with a drawn cutlass, who catches his right arm; they struggle round.* WILLIAM *throws him off, and stands over him.* HATCHET *on his knee; same time* LIEUTENANT PIKE *appears inside of door.* — TWO MARINES *appear at window. — Tableau*]

PIKE. Smugglers, surrender! or you have not a moment's life.

[HATCHET *and* RAKER, *startled by the appearance of* PIKE'S *party, recoil*]

WILLIAM. *Smugglers!* I thought they were not man-of-war's-men; true blue never piloted a woman on a quicksand.

PIKE [*takes belt from* HATCHET]. Here, William, wear this as a trophy of your victory.

WILLIAM. Thank ye, your honour, I'll ship it.

PIKE. Come, my lads, as you have cheated the King long enough, you shall now serve him — the fleet wants hands, and you shall aboard.

WILLIAM. If they are drafted aboard of us, all I wish is that I was boatswain's mate, for their sake! Oh, wouldn't I start 'em!

[*Music. — Exeunt* PIKE, HATCHET, RAKER. — *The* MARINES *follow*]

Now, Susan [*embraces her*], may I be lashed here until death gives the last whistle.

SUSAN. Oh, William! I never thought we should meet again.

WILLIAM. Not meet! Why, we shall never part again. The Captain has promised to write to the Admiralty for my discharge. I saved his life in the Basque Roads. But I say, Sue, why wasn't you on the beach?

SUSAN. I knew not of your arrival.

WILLIAM. Why, a sailor's wife, Susan, ought to know her husband's craft, if he sailed in a washing-tub, from a whole fleet. But how is this, Sue? — how is this? Poverty aboard? — and then your uncle —

[*Enter* DOGGRASS]

DOGGRASS [*advances*]. Now, Mrs. Susan, I am determined — [*Sees* WILLIAM]

WILLIAM. The very griffin I was talking of. Now, what are you staring at? What are you opening your mouth for like the main hold of a seventy-four? I should like to send you to sea in a leaky gun-boat, and keep you at the pumps for a six months' cruise.

DOGGRASS. What! William! [*In a fawning tone, offering his hand*]

WILLIAM. Avast, there! don't think to come under my lee in that fashion. Aren't you a neat gorgon of an uncle now, to cut the painter of a pretty pinnace like this, and send her drifting down the tide of poverty, without ballast, provisions, or compass? May you live a life of ban-yan days, and be put six upon four for't!

DOGGRASS. But you mistake, William —

WILLIAM. No palaver! tell it to the marines. What, tacking and double tacking! Come to what you want to say at once. If you want to get into the top, go up the futtock shrouds like a man — don't creep through lubber's hole. What have you got to say?

DOGGRASS. Don't — you have put my heart into my mouth.

WILLIAM. Have I? I couldn't put a blacker morsel there! Just come alongside here. [*Pulls him by neckcloth*] I am not much of a scholar, and don't understand fine words. Your heart is as hard as a ring-bolt — to coil it up at once, you are a d——d rascal! If you come here after your friends, you'll find 'em in the cock-pit of one of the fleet. You have missed the rattlin this time, but brought yourself up by the shrouds. Now, take my advice, — strike your false colours, or I wouldn't give a dead marine for the chance of your neck. [DOGGRASS *hurries off*] That fellow would sit still at his grog, at the cry of "A man overboard!" Oh, Susan, when I look at your eyes, you put me in mind of a frigate, with marines firing from the tops! Come along, Sue: first to fire a salute to old Dame Hatley, then to my shipmates. To-day we'll pitch care overboard, without putting a buoy over him — call for the fiddles — start the rum cask — tipple the grog — and pipe all hands to mischief. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE SIXTH. — *A View near Deal. — Public House. — Table with bottles and cups at back, — forms and stools for sailors, &c. — Loud laughing as scene opens.* — PETER, SEAWEED, GNATBRAIN, DOLLY, SAILORS, RUSTICS, MEN, *and* WOMEN *discovered drinking.*

SEAWEED. Belay that galley yarn, Peter, belay!

GNATBRAIN. Oh, let him go on — he lies like a purser at reckoning day.

SEAWEED. Where's William, I wonder? He promised to meet us. I suppose he's with his Susan now.

PETER. And where can he be better, do you think? But suppose, just to pass the time away, I give you the song that was made by Tom Splinter, upon Susan's parting with William in the Downs?

ALL. Ay, the song — the song!

SEAWEED. Come, pipe up, my boy! Poor Tom Splinter! he was cut in half by a bar-shot from the Frenchman. Well, every ball's commissioned. The song — the song!

PETER. Here goes; but I know I can't sing it now.

SEAWEED. Can't sing! bless you, whenever we want to catch a mermaid, we only make him chant a stave, and we've twenty round the ship in the letting go of an anchor.

[*Song* — BLUE PETER]

All in the Downs the fleet was moor'd,
The streamers waving on the wind,
When black-ey'd Susan came on board —
Oh! where shall I my true love find?
Tell me, ye jovial sailors, tell me true,
Does my sweet William sail among your crew?

William, who high upon the yard,
Rock'd with the billows to and fro;
Soon as her well-known voice he heard,
He sigh'd and cast his eyes below.
The cord slides swiftly through his glowing hands,
And quick as lightning on the deck he stands.

The boatswain gave the dreadful word,
The sails their swelling bosom spread;
No longer must she stay on board;
They kiss'd; she sighed; he hung his head.
Her less'ning boat unwilling rows to land;
Adieu! she cries, and waves her lily hand.

PETER. Halloo! who have we here? Man the yards, my boys — here comes the Captain.

[*Enter* CAPTAIN CROSSTREE. — SAILORS *take off their hats.* — LASSES *curtsy*]

CROSSTREE. I am sorry, my fine fellows, to interrupt your festivities, but you must aboard to-night.

ALL. To-night, your honour?

CROSSTREE. Yes! it is yet uncertain, that we may not be ordered to set sail to-morrow.

PETER. Set sail to-morrow! why the lords of the Admiralty will break the women's hearts, your honour.

CROSSTREE. Where is William?

PETER. He's with Susan, your honour; pretty black-ey'd Susan, as she is called.

CROSSTREE. With black-ey'd Susan! How is that?

PETER. How, your honour? why they are spliced together for life.

CROSSTREE. Married! I never heard of this!

PETER. No? why your honour, I thought it was as well known as the union-jack. They were spliced before we went upon the last station. Not know it, your honour? why, many a time has the middle-watch sung the parting of William and Susan.

CROSSTREE [*aside*]. Married! I had rather forfeited all chance of being an admiral. Well, my lads, you hear my advice; so make the best of your time, for to-morrow you may be sailing for blue water again.

[SAILORS *bow, go up* — CROSSTREE *exits in house*]

PETER. Them lords of the Admiralty know no more about pleasures of liberty, plenty of grog, and dancing with the lasses, than I knows about 'stronomy. Here comes William.

[*Music.* — *Enter* WILLIAM *and* SUSAN. — *They cheer him*]

WILLIAM. Here's my shipmates, Susan! Look at her, my hearties — I wouldn't give up the command of this craft, no — not to be made Lord High Admiral.

GNATBRAIN [*brings* DOLLY *down*]. Here's my craft. I wouldn't give up the command of this 'ere craft to be made Lord High Gardener on.

WILLIAM. What, honest Gnatbrain, — Susan has told me about you — give us a grapple! [*Shakes hands very forcibly.* — GNATBRAIN *writhes under it*] What are you looking for?

GNATBRAIN. Looking for my fingers.

WILLIAM [*takes out box*]. Here, take a bit from St. Domingo Billy.

GNATBRAIN. From what?

[SAILORS *gather round* WILLIAM]

WILLIAM. From St. Domingo Billy! I see you are taken back — steering in a fog; well, I'll just put on my top-lights to direct your course.

GNATBRAIN. Now, I'm a bit of a sailor — but none of your hard words.

WILLIAM. Hard words! no, I always speak good English. You don't think I'm like Lieutenant Lavender, of the lily-white schooner.

GNATBRAIN. But about St. Domingo Billy.

WILLIAM. It's lucky for you, that you've been good to Susan, or I shouldn't spin you these yarns. You see it was when the fleet was lying off St. Domingo, in the West Indies, the crew liked new rum and dancing with the niggers. Well, the Admiral (a good old fellow, and one as didn't like flogging) wouldn't give the men liberty; some of 'em, howsomever, would swim ashore at night, and come off in the morning. Now, you see, to hinder this, the Admiral and the Captains put St. Domingo Billy on the ship's books, and served him out his mess every morning.

GNATBRAIN. Who was St. Domingo Billy?

WILLIAM. Why, a shark, as long as the Captain's gig. This shark, or Billy — for that's what the sailors called him — used to swim round the fleet, and go from ship to ship, for his biscuit and raw junk, just like a Christian.

GNATBRAIN. Well, but your 'bacco-box, what about that?

WILLIAM. Steady! — I'm coming to it. Well, one morning, about eight bells, there was a black bumboat woman aboard, with a little piccaninny, not much longer than my hand. Well, she sat just in the gangway, — and there was Billy alongside, with his three decks of grinders, ready for what might come. Well, afore you could say about-ship, the little black baby jumped out of its mother's grappling, and fell into Billy's jaws. The black woman gave a shriek that would have split the boatswain's whistle! Tom Gunnell saw how the wind was: he was as fine a seaman as ever stept — stood six feet two, and could sit upon his pig-tail. Well, he snatched up a knife, overboard he jumps, and dives under Billy, and in a

minute the sea was as red as a marine; all the crew hung like a swarm of bees upon the shrouds, and when Tom came up, all over blood with the little baby in his hand, and the shark turned over dead upon its side — my eyes! such a cheer — it might have been heard at Greenwich.

DOLLY. Oh, no, William, not quite so far!

GNATBRAIN. Oh, yes, you might; that is, if the wind had blown that way very strong.

WILLIAM. We had 'em aboard, cut up Billy, and what do you think we found in him? all the watches and 'bacco-boxes as had been lost for the last ten years — an Admiral's cocked hat, and three pilot's telescopes. This is one on 'em! [*Showing box*]

GNATBRAIN. What! one of the telescopes?

WILLIAM. No, of the boxes, you lubber!

GNATBRAIN. Well, friend William, that's a tolerable yarn.

WILLIAM. True, true as the Nore Light. But come, my hearties, we are not by the galley fire — let's have a dance.

OMNES. Ay, a dance! — a dance!

[*Dance — end of which,* QUID *enters*]

QUID. Now, lads, all hands on board.

WILLIAM. On board, Master Quid! why, you are not in earnest?

QUID. Indeed, but I am: there's the first lieutenant waiting on the beach for all the liberty men.

[SAILORS *and* LASSES *retire and converse together, bidding each other farewell*]

SUSAN. Oh, William, must you leave me so early?

WILLIAM. Why, duty, you know, Susan, must be obeyed. [*Aside*] Cruise about here a little while — I'll down to the lieutenant and ax him for leave till to-morrow. Well, come along, shipmates; if so be that blue Peter must fly at the fore, why it's no use putting a black face on the matter.

[*Music.* — WILLIAM, SAILORS, *and* GIRLS, *exeunt*]

GNATBRAIN. This it is, you see, pretty Susan, to be married to a sailor. Now, don't you think it would be much better if William had a little cot, with six feet square for the cultivation of potatoes, than the forecastle for the rearing of laurels? To be obliged to leave you now!

SUSAN. Yes, but I trust he will be enabled to return; nay, there are hopes that he will gain his discharge; and then, with his prize-money, —

GNATBRAIN. Ay, I see, go into the mercantile line — take a shop for marine stores. But, come along, Susan, the evening is closing in — I'll see you to your cottage.

SUSAN. I thank you, good Gnatbrain, but I would, for a time, be alone.

GNATBRAIN. Ah, I see, melancholy and fond of moonlight. Well, poor thing, it's not to be wondered at. I was melancholy when I was first in love, but now I contrive to keep a light heart, though it is struck with an arrow. [*Exit*]

SUSAN. I hope he will return — surely, his officer will not be so unkind as to refuse him.

[*Enter* CAPTAIN CROSSTREE, *from Inn, intoxicated*]

CROSSTREE [*singing*]. "Cease, rude Boreas." — Confound that fellow's wine! — or mischief on that little rogue's black eyes, for one or the other of them has made sad havoc here.

SUSAN [*aside*]. The stranger officer that accosted me.

CROSSTREE. Well, now for the boat. [*Sees* SUSAN] May I never see salt water again, if this is not the very wench. My dear! my love! come here!

SUSAN. Intoxicated, too! I will hence. [*Going*]

CROSSTREE [*staying her*]. Stop! why, what are you fluttering about? Don't you know I've found out a secret? — ha, ha! I'm your husband's Captain.

SUSAN. I'm glad of it, sir.

CROSSTREE. Are you so? well, that sounds well.

SUSAN. For I think you will give my husband leave of absence, or, if that is impossible, allow me to go on board his ship.

CROSSTREE. Go on board — that you shall! You shall go in the Captain's gig — you shall live in the Captain's cabin.

SUSAN. Sir!

CROSSTREE. Would it not be a shame for such a beautiful, black-ey'd, tender little angel as yourself to visit between

decks? Come, think of it. As for William, he's a fine fellow, certainly, but you can forget him.

SUSAN. Sir, let me go!

CROSSTREE. Forget him and live for me. By heavens, I love you, and must have you!

SUSAN. If you are a gentleman, if you are a sailor, you will not insult a defenceless woman.

CROSSTREE. My dear, I have visited too many seaports not to understand all this. I know I may be wrong, but passion hurries me — the wine fires me — your eyes dart lightning into me, and you shall be mine! [*Seizes* SUSAN]

SUSAN. Let me go! in mercy! — William, William!

CROSSTREE. Your cries are vain! resistance useless!

SUSAN. Monster! William, William!

[*Music. — She breaks away from him, and runs off; he follows and drags her back, and, as he throws her round, she shrieks*]

[*Enter* WILLIAM, *with drawn cutlass,* SAILORS *and* GIRLS]

WILLIAM. Susan! and attacked by the buccaneers! Die!

[*Strikes* CROSSTREE *with cutlass, who staggers and is caught by* SEAWEED. — SUSAN *rushes up to* WILLIAM]

OMNES. The Captain!

[*Slow music. — Tableau, and*

END OF ACT FIRST

ACT II

SCENE FIRST. — *A Street in Deal.*

[*Enter* GNATBRAIN. — *Distant gun heard without*]

GNATBRAIN. Oh, dear! the Court Martial is ordered: the Captains, with the Admiral at their head, are assembling on board the ship, and there goes the signal gun for the commencement of the proceedings. Poor William!

[*Enter* DOGGRASS]

DOGGRASS. Poor William! aye, if pity would save him, his neck would be insured. Didn't he attempt to kill his Captain?

GNATBRAIN. True; he deserves hanging for that. You would have doubtless gone a different way to work. William cut down his officer in defence of his wife — now you, like a good, prudent man, would have thrust your hands into your pockets, and looked on.

DOGGRASS. None of your sneering, sirrah. William — hanging is too good for him!

GNATBRAIN. You know best what hanging is good for — but I know this, — if all the rascals who, under the semblance of a snug respectability, sow the world with dissensions and deceit, were fitted with a halter, rope would double its price, and the executioner set up his carriage.

DOGGRASS. Have you any meaning in this?

GNATBRAIN. No — none: you can couple my meaning with your honesty.

DOGGRASS. When will your tongue change its pertness?

GNATBRAIN. When your heart changes its colour.

DOGGRASS. My heart! I have nothing to reproach myself with; I feel strong in —

GNATBRAIN. Yes, you must be strong, there's no doubting that — else you'd never be able to carry that lump of marble in your bosom — that's a load would break the back of any porter.

DOGGRASS. I tell you what, my friend, I had some thoughts —

GNATBRAIN. Stop! I'll tell you what I had only just now — a dream.

DOGGRASS. A dream?

GNATBRAIN. Aye; I dreamt that a young lamb was set upon by a wolf, when, strange to say, a lion leapt upon it, and tore it piecemeal; at this moment a band of hunters came up, and secured the noble brute: they were about to kill the lion, their guns were pointed, their swords drawn, when a thing, at first no bigger than my hand, appeared in the sky — it came closer, and I saw it was a huge vulture; it went wheeling round and round the victim lion, and appeared to anticipate the feast of blood — and with a red and glaring eye, and grasping talons, seemed to demand the carcass, ere the lion yet was dead.

DOGGRASS. And this was a dream?

GNATBRAIN. Yes, a day-dream.

DOGGRASS. And what, since you will talk, say you to the vulture?

GNATBRAIN. Nothing; but I looked at it — and with a loathing, left it.

[*Exit, looking significantly at* DOGGRASS]

DOGGRASS. I shall never sleep quietly until I lay that rascal by the heels. Confusion take him! I'm ashamed to say I am almost afraid of him.

[*Enter* JACOB TWIG]

Now, Jacob, how fares Captain Crosstree?

JACOB. Better; it is thought he will recover.

DOGGRASS. Another disappointment; yet, by the rules of the service, William must die. Here, Jacob, I've something for you to —

JACOB. I've something for you, sir. [*Gives him money*]

DOGGRASS. Why, what's this?

JACOB. Three guineas, two shillings, and sixpence half-penny! That's just, sir, what I've received of you since I've been in your employ.

DOGGRASS. Well, and what of that?

JACOB. I don't feel comfortable with it, sir; I'd thank you to take it.

DOGGRASS. Take it! Are you mad?

JACOB. No, sir — I have been; I have been wicked, and I now think — and I wish you would think so too — that all wickedness is madness.

DOGGRASS. How is all this brought about?

JACOB. A short tale, sir; it's all with the Captain.

DOGGRASS. The Captain!

JACOB. Yes; I was in the public-house when the Captain was brought in with that gash in his shoulder; I stood beside his bed; it was steeped in blood — the doctor shook his head — the parson came and prayed; and when I looked on the Captain's blue lips and pale face, I thought what poor creatures we are; then something whispered in my heart, "Jacob, thou hast been a mischief-making, wicked lad — and suppose, Jacob, thou wert, at a moment's notice, to take the Captain's place!" I heard this — heard it as plain as my own voice — and my hair moved, and I felt as if I'd been dipped in a river, and I fell like a stone on my knees — when I got up again, I was quite another lad.

DOGGRASS. Ha, ha!

JACOB. That's not a laugh; don't deceive yourself, it sounds to my ears like the croak of a frog, or the hoot of an owl.

DOGGRASS. Fool!

JACOB. I ran as hard as I could run to Farmer Arable — told him what a rascal I was, and begged he'd hire me — he did, and gave me half-a-year's wages in advance, that I might return the money you had paid me — there it is.

DOGGRASS. Idiot! take the money.

JACOB. Every coin of it is a cockatrice's egg — it can bring forth nought but mischief.

DOGGRASS. Take it, or I'll throw it into the sea.

JACOB. Don't, for coming from your hand, it would poison all the fishes.

DOGGRASS. You will be a fool, then?

JACOB. Yes; one of your fools, Master Doggrass — I will be honest. [*Exit*]

DOGGRASS. All falling from me; no matter. I'll wait to see William disposed of; then, since the people here seem leagued against me, sell off my stock, and travel. The postman brought this packet [*producing one*] to my house, directed to Captain Crosstree. What can it contain? No matter — it is a virtue on the right side to be over-cautious; so go you into my pocket, until William is settled for. [*Distant gun heard without*] The Court is opened — now to watch its progress. [*Exit*]

SCENE SECOND. — *The State Cabin. — The Court Martial. — Three guns on each side of the cabin. — Music.*

[*The* ADMIRAL *sits at the head of the table, a union-jack flying over his chair; six* CAPTAINS *sit on each side of the table.* WILLIAM, *the* MASTER-AT-ARMS, *and* MARINE OFFICER. *A* MARINE *at each side, and one behind. A* MIDSHIPMAN *is in attendance*]

ADMIRAL. Prisoner, as your ship is ordered for instant service, and it has been thought expedient that your shipmates should be witnesses of whatever punishment the Court may award you, if found guilty of the crime wherewith you are charged, it will be sufficient to receive the depositions of the witnesses, without calling for the attendance of Captain Crosstree, whom it is yet impossible to remove from shore. One of

the witnesses, I am sorry to say, is your wife; however, out of mercy to your peculiar situation, we have not summoned her to attend.

William. Bless you, your honours, bless you! My wife, Susan, standing here before me, speaking words that would send me to the fore-yard — it had been too much for an old sailor. I thank your honours! If I must work for the dead reckoning, I wouldn't have it in sight of my wife.

Admiral. Prisoner, you are charged with an attempt to slay Robert Crosstree, Captain of his Majesty's Navy, and your superior officer. Answer, are you guilty, or not guilty?

William. I want, your honour, to steer well between the questions. If it be asked, whether I wished to kill the Captain, I could, if I'd a mind to brag, show that I loved him — loved him next to my own Susan! All's one for that. I am not guilty of an attempt to kill the Captain; but, if it be guilt to strike in defence of a sailor's own sheet-anchor, his wife, why I say guilty, your honour; I say it, and think I've no cause to hang out the red at my fore.

Admiral. You plead guilty — let me, as one of your judges, advise you to reconsider the plea. At least take the chances which the hearing of your case may allow.

William. I leave that chance to your own hearts, your honours; if they have not a good word for poor Will, why, it is below the honesty of a sailor to go upon the half tack of a lawyer.

Admiral. You will not retract the plea?

William. I'm fixed; anchored to it, fore an' aft, with chain cable.

Admiral. Does no one of your shipmates attend to speak to your character? Have you no one?

William. No one, your honour? I didn't think to ask them — but let the word be passed, and may I never go aloft, if, from the boatswain to the black cook, there's one that could spin a yarn to condemn me.

Admiral. Pass the word forward for witnesses.

Midshipman. Witnesses for the prisoner.

[*Enter* Quid. — *Bows to Court*]

Admiral. What are you?

Quid. Boatswain, your honour.

Admiral. What know you of the prisoner?

Quid. Know, your honour? — the trimmest sailor as ever handled rope; the first on his watch, the last to leave the deck; one as never belonged to the after-guard. He has the cleanest top, and the whitest hammock. From reefing a main-topsail to stowing a netting, give me taut Will afore any able seaman in his Majesty's fleet.

Admiral. But what know you of his moral character?

Quid. His moral character, your honour? Why, he plays upon the fiddle like an angel!

Admiral. Are there any other witnesses? [*Exit* Quid]

[*Enter* Seaweed]

What do you know of the prisoner?

Seaweed. Nothing but good, your honour.

Admiral. He was never known to disobey command?

Seaweed. Never but once, your honours, and that was when he gave me half of his grog when I was upon the black list.

Admiral. What else do you know?

Seaweed. Why this. I know, your honour, if William goes aloft, there's sartin promotion for him.

Admiral. Have you nothing else to show? Did he ever do any great benevolent action?

Seaweed. Yes, he twice saved the Captain's life, and once ducked a Jew slopseller.

[Admiral *motions witnesses to retire. Exit* Seaweed]

Admiral. Are there any more witnesses?

William. Your honours, I feel as if I were in irons, or seized to the grating, to stand here and listen, — like the landlord's daughter of the Nelson, — to nothing but yarns about service and character. My actions, your honours, are kept in the log-book aloft. If, when that's overhauled, I'm not found a trim seaman, why it's only throwing salt to the fishes to patter here.

Admiral. Remove the prisoner.

[*Exeunt* Master-at-Arms, *with* William, Marines, *and* Midshipman]

Gentlemen, nothing more remains for us than to consider the justice of our

verdict. Although the case of the unfortunate man admits of many palliatives, still, for the upholding of a necessary discipline, any commiseration would afford a dangerous precedent, and I fear, cannot be indulged. Gentlemen, are you all determined on your verdict? Guilty, or not guilty? — Guilty? [*After a pause, the* CAPTAINS *bow assent*] It remains then for me to pass the sentence of the law? [CAPTAINS *bow*] Bring back the prisoner.

[*Reënter* WILLIAM *and* MASTER-AT-ARMS]

ADMIRAL. Prisoner — after a patient and impartial investigation of your case, this Court has unanimously pronounced you — *Guilty*. [*Pause*] If you have anything to say in arrest of judgment, — now is your time to speak.

WILLIAM. In a moment, your honours. — Damn it, my top-lights are rather misty! Your honours, I had been three years at sea, and had never looked upon or heard from my wife — as sweet a little craft as was ever launched. I had come ashore, and I was as lively as a petrel in a storm. I found Susan — that's my wife, your honours — all her gilt taken by the land-sharks; but yet all taut, with a face as red and rosy as the King's head on the side of a fire-bucket. Well, your honours, when we were as merry as a ship's crew on a pay-day, there comes an order to go aboard. I left Susan, and went with the rest of the liberty-men to ax leave of the first-lieutenant. I hadn't been gone the turning of an hour-glass, when I heard Susan giving signals of distress; I out with my cutlass, made all sail, and came up to my craft. I found her battling with a pirate. I never looked at his figure-head, never stopped — would any of your honours? Long live you and your wives, say I! Would any of your honours have rowed alongside as if you'd been going aboard a royal yacht? No, you wouldn't; for the gilt swabs on the shoulders can't alter the heart that swells beneath; you would have done as I did; and what did I? why, I cut him down like a piece of old junk. Had he been the first lord of the Admiralty, I had done it!

[*Overcome with emotion*]

ADMIRAL. Prisoner, we keenly feel for your situation; yet you, as a good sailor, must know that the course of justice cannot be evaded.

WILLIAM. Your honours, let me be no bar to it; I do not talk for my life. Death! why, if I 'scaped it here, — the next capful of wind might blow me from the yard-arm. All I would strive for, is to show I had no malice; all I wish whilst you pass sentence, is your pity; that, your honours, whilst it is your duty to condemn the sailor, may, as having wives you honour and children you love, respect the husband.

ADMIRAL. Have you anything further to advance?

WILLIAM. All my cable is run out. I'm brought to.

ADMIRAL [*all the* CAPTAINS *rise*]. Prisoner! it is now my most painful duty to pass the sentence of the Court upon you. The Court commiserates your situation; and, in consideration of your services, will see that every care is taken of your wife when deprived of your protection.

WILLIAM. Poor Susan!

ADMIRAL. Prisoner! your case falls under the twenty-second Article of War. [*Reads*] "If any man in, or belonging to the Fleet, shall draw, or offer to draw, or lift up his hand against his superior officer, he shall suffer death." [*Putting on his hat*] The sentence of the Court is, that you be hanged at the fore-yard-arm of this, his Majesty's ship, at the hour of ten o'clock. Heaven pardon your sins, and have mercy on your soul! This Court is now dissolved.

[*Music.* — ADMIRAL *and* CAPTAINS *come forward.* — ADMIRAL *shakes hands with* WILLIAM, *who, overcome, kneels.* — *After a momentary struggle, he rises, collects himself, and is escorted from the cabin in the same way that he entered.* — *The scene closes.* — *Gun fires*]

SCENE THIRD. — *The Gun-room of* WILLIAM'S *Ship. Tomahawks crossed, and fire-buckets in a row.* — *Music.*

[*Enter* LIEUTENANT PIKE, *two* MARINES, WILLIAM, MASTER-AT-ARMS, *followed by* QUID *and* SEAWEED]

PIKE. Now, William, what cheer?

WILLIAM. Water-logged, your honour — my heart's sprung a-leak — I'm three feet water in the hold.

PIKE. Come, summon all your firmness.

WILLIAM. I will, your honour; but just then I couldn't help thinking that when I used to keep the middle watch with you, I never thought it would come to this.

PIKE. But you are a brave fellow, William, and fear not death.

WILLIAM. Death! No — since I first trod the King's oak, he has been about me. I have slept near him, watched near him — he has looked upon my face, and saw I shrunk not. In a storm I have heeded him not — in the fury of the battle I thought not of him. Had I been mowed down by ball or cutlass, my shipmates, as they had thrown me to the sharks, would have given me a parting look of friendship, and over their grog have said I did my duty. This, your honour, would not have been death, but lying-up in ordinary. But to be swayed up like a wet jib, to dry — the whole fleet — nay, the folks of Deal, people that knew me, used to pat me on the head when a boy, — all these looking at me! Oh, thank heaven, my mother's dead!

PIKE. Come, William. [*Shakes his head*] There, think no more after that fashion. Are there any of your shipmates, on whom you would wish to bestow something?

WILLIAM. Thankee, your honour. Lieutenant — I know you won't despise the gift because it comes from one who walked the forecastle — here's my box — keep it for poor Will's sake —you and I, your honour, have laid yard-arm and yard-arm with many a foe — let us hope we shall come gunwale to gunwale in another climate. [*Gives him box. — To* MARINE OFFICER] Your honour's hand — blue Peter's flying — the vessel of life has her anchor a-trip, and must soon get under way for the ocean of eternity. Your honour will have to march me to the launching place. You won't give a ship a bad name because she went awkwardly off the stocks. Take this, your honour. [*Opens watch*] This paper was cut by Susan's fingers before we left the Downs; take it, your honour, I can't look at it. Master Quid, take this for my sake. [*Gives chain and seals, among which is a bullet*] You see that bullet — preserve that more than the gold. That ball was received by Harry Trunnion in defence of me. I was disarmed, and the enemy was about to fire, when Harry threw himself before me, and received that bullet in his breast. I took it flattened from his dead body — have worn it about me — it has served to remind me that Harry suffered for my sake, and that it was my duty, when chance might serve, to do the like for another.

PIKE. And now, William, have you any request to make?

WILLIAM. Lieutenant, you see this locket. [*Points to locket at his neck*] It is Susan's hair. When I'm in dock, don't let it be touched: I know you won't. You have been most kind to me, Lieutenant, and if those who go aloft may know what passes on the high sea, I shall yet look down upon you in the middle-watch, and bless you. Now, one word more. How fares the Captain?

PIKE. Very ill. So ill that he has been removed from the command, and the first lieutenant acts until the new Captain arrives.

WILLIAM. His case, then, is desperate. Well, if he goes out of commission, I can't tremble to meet him. I bear no malice, your honour — I loved the Captain.

PIKE. You have nothing to ask?

WILLIAM. Nothing, your honour. Susan and some friends will shortly be on board. All I want is, that I may ask for strength to see my wife — my poor, young, heart-broken wife, for the last time, and then die like a seaman and a man. [*Music.* — LIEUTENANT PIKE, QUID, SEAWEED, *and* MARINES, *exeunt*] I am soon to see poor Susan! I should like, first, to beat all my feelings to quarters, that they may stand well to their guns, in this their last engagement. I'll try and sing that song, which I have many a time sung in the mid-watch — that song which has often placed my heart, though a thousand miles at sea, at my once happy home. [WILLIAM *sings a verse of "Black-Ey'd Susan"*] My heart is splitting! [SUSAN *shrieks without — rushes in, and throws herself into* WILLIAM'S *arms*]

Oh, Susan! Well, my poor wench, how fares it?

SUSAN. Oh, William! and I have watched, prayed for your return — smiled in the face of poverty, stopped my ears to the reproaches of the selfish, the worse pity of the thoughtless — and all, all for this!

WILLIAM. Ay, Sue, it's hard! but

that's all over — to grieve is useless. Susan, I might have died disgraced — have left you the widow of a bad, black-hearted man. I know 'twill not be so — and in this, whilst you remain behind me, there is at least some comfort. I died in a good cause; I died in defence of the virtue of a wife — her tears will fall like spring rain on the grass that covers me.

SUSAN. Talk not so — your grave! I feel it is a place where my heart must throw down its heavy load of life.

WILLIAM. Come, Susan, shake off your tears. There, now, smile a bit — we'll not talk again of graves. Think, Susan, that I am a-going on a long foreign station — think so. Now, what would you ask? — have you nothing, nothing to say?

SUSAN. Nothing! Oh, when at home, hoping, yet trembling for this meeting, thoughts crowded on me; I felt as if I could have talked to you for days — stopping for want of power, not words. Now, the terrible time is come — now I am almost tongue-tied — my heart swells to my throat — I can but look and weep. [*Gun fires*] That gun! Oh, William! husband! is it so near? You speak not — tremble!

WILLIAM. Susan, be calm. If you love your husband, do not send him on the deck a white-faced coward. Be still, my poor girl, I have something to say — until you are calm, I will not utter it; now, Susan —

SUSAN. I am cold, motionless as ice.

WILLIAM. Susan! you know the old aspen that grows near to the church porch. You and I, when children, almost before we could speak plainly, have sat and watched and wondered at its shaking leaves. I grew up, and that tree seemed to me a friend that loved me, yet had not the tongue to tell me so. Beneath its boughs our little arms have been locked together — beneath its boughs I took the last kiss of your white lips, when hard fortune made me turn sailor. I cut from that tree this branch. [*Produces it*] Many a summer's day aboard, I've lain in the top and looked at these few leaves, until I saw green meadows in the salt sea, and heard the bleating of the sheep. When I am dead, Susan, let me be laid under that tree — let me —

[*Gun fires. —* SUSAN *falls. — Slow Music. —* LIEUTENANT PIKE *and* SEAWEED *enter. —* WILLIAM *gives* SUSAN *in charge of* SEAWEED, *takes his handkerchief off, ties it around her neck, kisses her, and she is carried off. —* LIEUTENANT PIKE *and* WILLIAM *exeunt*]

SCENE FOURTH. — *The Forecastle of the Ship. — Procession along the starboard gangway. —* MASTER-AT-ARMS, *with a drawn sword under his arm, point next to the prisoner. —* WILLIAM, *without his neckcloth. —* MARINES, OFFICER OF MARINES, ADMIRAL, CAPTAIN, LIEUTENANTS, *and* MIDSHIPMEN. — *A* SAILOR *standing at one of the forecastle guns, with the lock-string in his hand. — A platform extends from the cathead to the fore rigging. — Music.*

MASTER-AT-ARMS. Prisoner, are you prepared?

WILLIAM. Bless you! bless you all —

[*Mounts the platform.* CAPTAIN CROSSTREE *rushes on from gangway*]

CROSSTREE. Hold! hold!

ADMIRAL. Captain Crosstree — retire, sir, retire.

CROSSTREE. Never! If the prisoner be executed, he is a murdered man. I alone am the culprit — 'twas I who would have dishonoured him.

ADMIRAL. This cannot plead here — he struck a superior officer.

CROSSTREE. No.

OMNES. No?

CROSSTREE. He saved my life; I had written for his discharge — villainy has kept back the document — 'tis here, dated back. When William struck me he was not the King's sailor — I was not his officer.

ADMIRAL [*taking the paper. — Music*]. He is free!

[*The* SEAMEN *give three cheers. —* WILLIAM *leaps from the platform. —* SUSAN *is brought on by* CAPTAIN CROSSTREE]

CURTAIN

RICHELIEU; OR, THE CONSPIRACY

(1839)

By Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON

(1803–1873)

Bulwer-Lytton represents all that is false, shallow, and insincere in the history of the early nineteenth century English drama. Both as a novelist and as a playwright, he measures up to the reputation of a dandy which his social position encouraged. Critics never took Bulwer-Lytton seriously; the very insincerity with which he intermittently assumed interest in the current topics of the day, marked him as a dilettante. Knowing certain characteristics in the actor, Macready, it is easily understandable why he should turn to Bulwer for those theatrical effects and those humanly impossible pieces which were the rage of the English theatre of the '30's and '40's.

Bulwer's name is identified with the freeing of the English theatre which took place by Act of Parliament in 1832, when the power of the "patent" theatres was broken, and the sway of Macready was shaken by the rampant democracy which seized the theatre as soon as Parliament had passed the acts which Bulwer-Lytton championed. Let us recall that Macready had made a pathetic appeal to Browning. "Write me a play," he said, "and keep me from going to America." One may take this as the first incentive toward play-writing given to the poet. The insincerity of Macready himself, his vain striving to be identified with the brilliant minds of his period, the jealousies and vanities reflected in his management, are not unkin to the fopperies of Bulwer-Lytton, who was continually courting the social life of his day, and pretending that he was a deep, penetrative student of his contemporaries.

Macready's association with Bulwer brought forth no deep results. The theatrical pieces which Bulwer began writing in 1837 were reflective of all that was worst in the school of Victor Hugo and Alexander Dumas, *père*. No critic takes any effort of his seriously, not even his historical treatment, which was riddled with excesses and distortions. But the stage often gives the lie to the most just critical estimate of a man. False as brass may be Bulwer's "The Lady of Lyons", his "Richelieu", and his "Money", but none the less have they held the English stage for nearly a century because of their theatricalism. They are externally effective, though their psychology never holds. They are dependent on romantic situations that defy logical explanation, and they are replete with those whisperings, those "asides", those jugglings with important documents, those excesses of emotional change from saintliness to villainy, which the London public of Bulwer's day deceived itself into believing were probable and possible.

The story is told that Bulwer's first play, "Duchess de la Vallière", was offered to the manager, Bunn, in 1836, on condition that it should be accepted without being read. That was the self-importance of him, and Bunn treated him with a prompt refusal. It was given at Covent Garden with Farren, Miss Faucit, and Macready in the cast. After this, Macready produced Browning's "Strafford",

and when he himself undertook the management of Covent Garden, it was his last stab at trying to overcome the effective work of the Select Committee on Dramatic Literature which, in 1832, had released the monopoly from the "patent" theatres. It must be recalled that Macready's repertory from 1823–1837 included such characters as *Caius Gracchus*, *William Tell*, *Virginius*, *Rob Roy*, *Ion*. These, apart from his Shakespearean rôles, are reflective of the measure which he would adopt as a manager. Spectacular romance, as Archer says in his "Life of Macready", with sombre castles and shadowy halls, was the order of the day. In one respect he kept up the traditions of a distinctive line of actors. His Shakespearean productions aimed at rich and detailed garniture.

It was after his production of "King Lear" that Macready produced "The Lady of Lyons", a play by Bulwer, announced on the programme as anonymous, and written by him during 1838, in a little over two weeks. A preface to the first edition of the printed play made confession that the plot was based on a tale entitled "The Bellows Mender." The piece met with immediate success, and has, strange to say, been a drawing card for many generations, even attracting such an artist as Henry Irving, who produced it, with all his care and imaginative forcefulness, on April 17, 1879.

Bulwer had been approached by the actor in the early summer of 1838, and a letter, dated September, 1838, shows that he has been giving serious consideration to Macready's request for him to write a play. The communication runs as follows:

My dear Macready,

I have thought of a subject. The story full of incident and interest. It is to this effect. In the time of Louis XIII. The Chevalier de Marillac is the wittiest and bravest gentleman, celebrated for his extravagant valour and his enthusiasm for enjoyment; but in his most mirthful moments a dark cloud comes over him at one name — the name of Richelieu. He confides to his friend Cinq Mars the reason, viz., he had once entered into a conspiracy against Richelieu: Richelieu discovered and sent for him. "Chevalier de Marillac," said he, "I do not desire to shed your blood on the scaffold, but you must die. Here is a command on the frontier; fall in battle." He went to the post, but met glory, and not death. Richelieu, reviewing the troops, found him still living, and said, "Remember, the sword is over your head. I take your parole to appear before me once a quarter. You can still find death. I will give you time for it." Hence his extravagant valour; hence his desire to make the most of life. While making this confidence to Cinq Mars, he is sent for by Richelieu. He goes as to death. Richelieu receives him sternly, reminds him of his long delay, upbraids him for his profligate life, etc. Marillac answers with mingled wit and nobleness; and at last, instead of sentencing him to death, Richelieu tells him that he has qualities that make him wish to attach him to himself, and that he will marry him to a girl with a great dowry, and give him high office at Court. He must marry directly. Marillac goes out enchanted.

Now, Richelieu's motive is this: Louis XIII. has fallen in love with this girl, Louise de la Porte, and wishes to make her his mistress. All the King's mistresses have hitherto opposed Richelieu. He is resolved that the King shall have no more. He will have no rival with the King. He therefore resolves to

marry her to Marillac, whose life is in his power, whom he can hold in command, whom he believes to be too noble to suffer the adulterous connection.

Marillac is then introduced, just married, with high appointments and large dowry, the girl beautiful, when, on his wedding-day, Cinq Mars tells him that the King loves his wife. His rage and despair — conceives himself duped. Scene with the girl, in which he recoils from her. Suddenly three knocks at the door. He is sent for by the King, and despatched to a distance; the bride, not wived, is summoned to Court.

Marillac, all pride and wrath, and casting all upon Richelieu, agrees to conspire against the Cardinal's life. The fortress where Richelieu lodges is garrisoned with the friends of the conspirators. Just as he has agreed, he received an anonymous letter telling him that his wife is at Chantilly; that she will sleep in the chamber of the Montmorencies; that Louis means to enter the room that night; that if he wishes to guard his honour, he can enter the palace by a secret passage which opens in a picture of Hugo de Montmorenci, the last duke, who had been beheaded by Louis (an act for which the King always felt remorse). This Montmorenci had been the most intimate friend of Marillac, and had left him his armour as a present. A thought strikes Marillac, and he goes off the stage.

Louise alone in this vast room — the picture of Montmorenci in complete armour — a bed at the end. She complains of her husband's want of love, and laments her hard fate — dismisses her women. The King enters and locks the doors; after supplication and resistance on her part, he advances to seize her, when from Montmorenci's picture comes a cry of "Hold!" and the form descends from the panel and interposes. The King, horror-stricken and superstitious, flies; Louise faints. The form is Marillac. While she is still insensible, the clock strikes; it is the hour he is to meet the conspirators. He summons her women, and leaves her.

Richelieu alone at night when Marillac enters to him, tells him his life is in his power, upbraids him for his disgrace, etc. Richelieu informs him that he has married him to Louise to prevent her dishonour, that he had sent the anonymous letter, etc., and converts Marillac into gratitude. But what is to be done? The conspirators have filled the fortress. They (Richelieu and Marillac) retire into another room, and presently the conspirators enter the one they have left, and Marillac joins them and tells them the Cardinal is dead, that he will see to the funeral, etc., and they had better go at once and announce it to the King, and that there are no marks of violence, that it seems like a fit (being suffocation).

Scene in the Streets of Paris.

The King, who had always feared and hated Richelieu, hears the news, and is at first rejoiced, the courtiers delighted, Paris in a jubilee. But suddenly comes news of commotion, riot; messengers announce the defeat of the armies; the Spaniards have crossed the frontiers, his general, De Feuguieres, is slain; hubbub and uproar without, with cries of "Hurrah! the old Cardinal is dead," etc., when there is a counter-cry of "The Cardinal, the Cardinal!" and a band of soldiers appear, followed by Richelieu himself in complete armour. At this sight, the confusion, the amaze, etc., the mob changes humours, and there is a cry of "Long live the great Cardinal!"

Scene, the King's chamber.

The King, enraged at the trick played on him, and at his having committed himself to joy at the Cardinal's death, hears that De Marillac had announced the false report, orders him to the Bastile, tells the Count de Charost to forbid Richelieu the Louvre, and declares henceforth he will reign alone. Joy of the anti-Cardinalists, when the great doors are thrown open, and Richelieu, pale, suffering, sick, in his Cardinal's robes, leaning on his pages, enters and calls on Charost (the very man who is to forbid his entrance) to give him his arm, which Charost tremblingly does before the eyes of the King! Richelieu and the King alone. Richelieu says he has come to tender his resignation, the King accepts it, and Richelieu summons six secretaries groaning beneath sacks of public papers, all demanding immediate attention. Richelieu retires to a distance, and appears almost dying. The King desperately betakes himself to the papers, his perplexity, bewilderment, and horror at the dangers round him. At last he summons the Cardinal to his side and implores him to resume the office. The Cardinal, with great seeming reluctance, says he only will on one condition, — complete power over foes and friends; Louis must never again interfere with public business. He then makes him sign various papers, and when all is done the old man throws off the dying state, rises with lion-like energy: "France is again France — to the Frontiers. *I* lead the armies," etc., (a splendid burst). Louis, half enfeebled, half ashamed, retires. Richelieu, alone, gives various papers to the secretaries, and summons Marillac and his wife. He asks her if she has been happy, she says "No," thinking her husband hates her; puts the same question to Marillac, who, thinking she wishes to be separated, says the same. He then tells them as the marriage has not been fulfilled they can be divorced. They wofully agree, when turning to Marillac he shows him the King's order that he should go to the Bastile, and then adds that in favour of his service in saving his (Richelieu's) life, he has the power to soften his sentence, but he must lose his offices at Court and go into exile. On hearing this Louise turns round — her love breaks out — she will go with him into banishment, and the reconciliation is complete. Richelieu, regarding them, then adds: "Your sentence remains the same — we banish you still — Ambassador to Austria."

An entry in Macready's diary for November 15, 1838, records the fact that he had read the greater part of Bulwer's "Richelieu", which, "though excellent in parts, is deficient in the important point of continuity of interest." During the day, he continued his reading, and feared the play would not do because it could not be made effective. Bulwer had sent the manuscript to the manager with a note, saying:

Acts one and three may require a little shortening, but you are a master at that. The rest average the length of the acts in "The Lady of Lyons." I hope the story is clear. The domestic interest is not so strong as in "The Lady", but I think the acting of *Richelieu's* part may counterbalance this defect. For the rest I say of this, as of "The Lady", if at all hazardous or uncertain, it must not be acted, and I must try again.

Evidently, Bulwer did not at first send Macready the complete manuscript, for an entry on November 21 in the actor's diary states that Bulwer called, bringing with him the completed "Richelieu", and continues:

I begin to be deadened to the interest of its story; it seems to be occasionally lengthy. I fear it has not the clinging interest of his present successful play, but hope and trust are good supporters.

Macready pondered a long time over the possibilities of the play, and, on November 25, began reading and punctuating and cutting it. His work had reached a certain point during the day, when he decided to read it to Bulwer and Forster, who was the friend of Dickens. But he was disappointed in the effect produced, and he confessed that when he had reached the fifth act, Forster was sound asleep. The situation was one which cut deep into the vanity of Bulwer, who left, Macready says, very much hurt. Between that time and December 16 the play was evidently rewritten, and Macready found it greatly improved, but not quite to that point where it meant success. Notwithstanding his doubts, he invited a party of friends, among them Browning and Blanchard, to a reading of the play on December 16. Pencil and paper were given to each person present, and they were asked to write their criticisms without interrupting the reading by conversation. The consensus of opinion was that the manuscript was a good one, and Macready, very generously, forwarded these communications to the author. Bulwer replied with certain misgivings:

The result is encouraging. But at the risk of seeming over fearful, I must add also that it is not decisive. . . . Browning's short line of "The play's the thing" is a laconism that may mean much or little. Besides he wants experience. Were I myself certain of the dramatic strength of the play (as I was in the case of "The Lady of Lyons"), I would at once decide on the experiment from the opinions you have collected. But I own I am doubtful, though hopeful, of the degree of dramatic strength in it; and I remain just as irresolute now as I was before. I fancy that the effect on the stage of particular scenes cannot be conveyed by reading. Thus in the fifth act the grouping of all the characters around *Richelieu*, the effect of his sudden recovery, etc. No reading, I think, can accurately gauge the probable effect of this. And in the fourth act the clinging of *Julie* to *Richelieu*, the protection he gives her, etc., will have, I imagine, the physical effect of making the audience forget whether he is her father or not. There they are before you, flesh and blood, the old man and the young bride involved in the same fate, and creating the sympathy of a domestic relation. More than all my dependence on the stage, is my reliance on the acting of *Richelieu* himself, the embodiment of the portraiture, the look, the gesture, the personation, which reading cannot give. But still I may certainly overrate all this. For if the play do fail in interest, the character may reward the actor, but not suffice to carry off the play, especially as he is not always on the stage. On the whole, therefore, I am unable to give a casting vote; and I leave it to you with this assurance, that if it be withdrawn you shall have another play by the end of February.

All through these preliminary negotiations, Bulwer was never confident of his own ability. What he aimed at was not a literary production but a popular success, and he was not even willing to have faith in his own powers. At one time he wrote to Macready:

I begin to despair of the play and of myself. Unless, therefore, upon consideration, you see clearly what at present seems doubtful, the triumphant

effect of the portraiture and action of *Richelieu* himself, you had better return me the play; and if I can form myself in a new school of art, and unlearn all that tact and thought have hitherto taught me, I will attempt another. But for this year you must do without me.

Macready did not let the matter drop, however. He was too confident of his own ability to raise the play to the point of success, and he began making suggestions which were combated at every turn by Bulwer. Macready declares, however, that

When I developed the object of the whole plan of alterations, he was in ecstasies. I never saw him so excited, several times exclaiming he was "enchanted" with the plan, and observed in high spirits, "What a fellow you are!"

Bulwer had not reckoned without his host. Even as he liked to be flattered, so in turn he knew when to flatter; and it is not surprising to find Macready exclaiming, after Bulwer had left him one day, — "What a fine man he is!"

Sober judgment, however, made Macready change his point of view about the manuscript. He wrote a hasty note to Bulwer, claiming, so Molloy records — "that his play would have been valuable from any other person, but that it would not serve his interest, whether in reference to his literary fame, his station, or his political position."

To which Bulwer instantly replied:

I fully appreciate the manly and generous friendship you express so well, and have only one way to answer it. I had intended to turn to some other work already before me. But I will now lay all by, and neither think of, nor labour at anything else, until something or other be done to realize our common object. Send me back "Richelieu"; and if you think it possible, either by alterations or by throwing the latter acts overboard altogether, to produce such situations as may be triumphant, we will try again. The historical character of *Richelieu* is not to be replaced, and is therefore worth preserving. But if neither of us can think of such situations, we must lay his Eminence on the shelf and try something else.

It was in this spirit that "Richelieu" was rewritten, and brought to the judgment of Browning and Blanchard.

But there was another supreme test to which the play was put, through the proposal of Bulwer. Molloy records the following:

Do you recollect [he asks Macready] that passage in The Confessions, when Rousseau, haunted by vague fear that he was destined to be damned, resolved to convince himself one way or the other; and taking up a stone shied it at a tree? If the stone hit, he was to be saved; if it missed, he was to be damned. Luckily it hit the tree, and Rousseau walked away with his mind perfectly at ease. Let us follow this notable example. Our tree shall be in the greenroom. You shall shy at the actors. If it hit the mark, well and good. If not, we shall know our fate. To speak literally, I accept your proposal to abide by the issue of a reading to the actors; though I remember that jury anticipated great things from "La Vallière", and I think they generally

judge according as they like their parts. The general tone of your friendly and generous letter induces me, indeed, to release you at once from the responsibility of the decision, and to say boldly that I am prepared to have the play acted. It can therefore be read with that impression to the greenroom, and if it does not take there, why it will not be too late to retreat. If it does, I can only say *Make ready! Present! Fire!* All I could doubt was the theatrical interest of the story. Your account reassured me on that point, and therefore you will have fair play for your own art and genius in the predominant character.

The beginning of the new year brought the finished manuscript of "Richelieu" from Bulwer, and, by January 5, Macready was pleased to find that the play excited the actors "in a very extraordinary manner", when he came to read the script to his company.

On the ninth of the month he had decided to produce the play without any further delay, and, as was his custom, started work on the punctuation. By February 20, he was deep in a consideration of the character of *Richelieu*, whom he confesses Bulwer had made particularly difficult, because of inconsistency. He writes:

Bulwer has made him resort to low jest, which outrages one's notions of the ideal of Cardinal Richelieu, with all his vanity and suppleness and craft.

The actor evidently placed himself under the tutelage of Bulwer, for the latter sent him a list of books to read on the Cardinal's character. The deeper he got into the work, the more discouraged he became, until he finally reached the conclusion that in order to give reality to the character of *Richelieu*, he must fabricate much of his interpretation. As the month of February progressed, the work of rehearsals became more and more arduous. Bulwer called his attention, during the course of the preparations, to the following:

I know not if you conceive *Richelieu's* illness (Act V.) as I do? I do not mean it for a show illness. He is really ill, though he may exaggerate a little. When they are going to tear France from him, they do really tug at his heartstrings. He is really near fainting at the prospect of his experiment with the secretaries: and it is the mind invigorating the body, it is the might of France passing into him, which effects the cure. If there be delusion, it is all sublimed and exalted by the high-hearted truth at the bottom of it.

William Archer has recorded that, when the play was first conceived by Bulwer, the part of *De Mauprat* was designed for Macready.

The piece was presented, for the first time, at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, on Thursday, March 7, 1839.

Macready notes the event in his diary record for March 8, 1839. He writes:

Saw the papers. The *Morning Chronicle* was as usual most kind and eulogistic; the *Times*, although trying to damn with faint praise, admitting much more than I expected, and enough to give to its readers, who know its baseness, the assurance of success. Went to the theatre, where I cut the play with the performers, and expressed myself much obliged by their zeal and industry. When we had separated, Bulwer came and altered all that we had arranged — annoying and disconcerting me very much. I struggled for the omission of

several passages, but he was triumphant, and therefore no longer so *docile* as I had heretofore found him.

A first-night impression of the play is contained in Westland Marston's "Our Recent Actors."

On March 13, one notes a change of heart in Macready, due to the annoyance of the dramatist:

Two long notes from Bulwer — with more last words — and a lengthy criticism on some points of my performance, in which he wishes me to substitute coarse and vulgar attempt at low farcical point in one instance, and melodramatic rant in another for the more delicate shadings of character that I endeavour to give. I have long had surmises about Bulwer's taste from several things in the comedy of "La Vallière" — in the original of "The Lady of Lyons" and in the original copy of this play. I am *sure* that his taste is not to be depended on.

The letter referred to runs as follows:

March 13, 1839.

My dear Macready,

I saw a good deal of the play last night, which went off better than on Monday. The restitution of the second scene, Act III, was quite right. I wish time could allow a little of the comic part, Act II. It is missed, and has been complained of to me in *many* quarters. But, perhaps, at all events it is too late to re-alter, even if time could be spared.

I wish to say I was much more struck by your acting in the three last acts to-night than even heretofore, and so, I think, was the House generally. Forgive me if I say that the *more* you come out from subdued dryness into power (which you did to-night) the more brilliant your success will be, and the more you will realize the Cardinal — "*colère* et *orgueilleux* dont chaque pensée avait tout le *chaleur* d'une passion." De Vigny was wrong in thinking him so *sec;* there was plenty of animal spirits in him. In the grave part of your performance I see only one sentence in which I could wish another conception. It is the end of the act — where you say "away with him." Now you speak "away with him" with contemptuous sport, like a man brushing away a trifle! The audiences, however, are prepared for something much more vehement — and the thought of your conception is almost too subtle for the gigantic audiences you have — but I think it would be more like the Cardinal, who is accustomed to come and feast over the execution of his foes, to throw more of the deadly force of malignant and exulting vindictiveness into the words — something more to correspond with his laugh in baffling the murderers at the castle. I would have him release the devil of his rage upon his victim. I would make him follow with eyes that threaten savage victory the retreating form of Baradas — in fact, here I would have the effect that of power, the closing power of the speech. In the comic part (you must pardon my presumption in this) I must still fancy that greater breadth of humour — more of what the French call *malice* — would illustrate the character more vividly, and be infinitely more effective. I fancy the *Cardinal* with a CHUCKLE — "le rire presque gai, mais toujours insultant" — which is ascribed to him. Thus, in "Colonel and Nobleman, my bashful Huguet, that can never be" — if it

could be said with a more jovial laugh, and then with a pointed slyness (no pause, but fronting the audience) and almost a wink of the eye to *Joseph*, "We'll promise," etc., — this, I think, would be more effective. So after he has told *Huguet* he may be noble, why not let him exchange a broad, humorous glance with *Joseph*, whom he passes at the moment, as much as to say, "There now, isn't that cleverly done?" In "Joseph, Bishop Joseph," I think it will be much more effective if you don't repeat *Joseph* twice — but make the point more sudden and hearty, "Ah Joseph — Bishop Joseph," and absolutely touch his ribs with the forefinger; there should, I am sure, be no pause and no reiteration between Joseph and Bishop Joseph. Now I have said eno' to make you think me the most presuming dog you have ever seen thrusting his paw into other people's paniers! But, mon cher, you have been as frank with me — so tit for tat.

May I further beg you to IMPLORE Miss Faucit to say, "I love AND I am a woman"; and with as much majestic swelling as she can; to-night she says, "I love *but* I am a woman," which is nonsense, and she whined it into the bargain.

Think as leniently as you can of my suggestions.

Yrs. ever,

E. L. B.

H. of C.

Tuesday night.

The next day Bulwer was proposing the subject for another play to Macready.

One of the most interesting tasks in dramatic history is to follow the variations in interpretation of a part as recorded in different theatrical annals. It is an easy matter for the theatrical student to assemble the dramatic criticisms which record the impressions of the acting of Macready, Phelps, Irving, and Edwin Booth in the rôle of *Richelieu*. It is a part essentially theatrical — one of the same proportions as Shakespeare's *Cardinal Wolsey* and Tennyson's *Becket*, but one that is more dependent than either of the other two on the imaginative fire poured into it by the actor. For the mould of "Richelieu", as shaped by Bulwer, is a very flimsy contrivance, made up of trite philosophies and violent situations. The melodramatic temper of the piece and the false poetic dialogue did not add to its dignity, although one can imagine the theatrical effectiveness of the "curse of Rome" speech, and of the insincere sentiments regarding the *Cardinal's* love of France. Bulwer has here juggled with plot and intrigue, and has so distorted history that one can scarcely take the play as a true historical drama. It is only when *Richelieu* is assumed by some actor of high imaginative power, like Irving, or of big emotional scope like Booth, that the part rises above its shallowness and empty verbosity. Yet, even in the reading, the effectiveness of the scenes strikes one quite as much as the lack of logic.[1]

[1] Dutton Cook refers to Thackeray's review of "Richelieu" in *Fraser's Magazine*, in which the play is spoken of as filled with "disagreeable bustle and petty complication of intrigue."

RICHELIEU;

OR,

THE CONSPIRACY

By E. BULWER-LYTTON

[From the first American Edition.]

TO THE

MARQUIS OF LANDSDOWNE, K.G.,

&c., &c.

THIS DRAMA
IS INSCRIBED IN TRIBUTE
TO THE TALENTS WHICH COMMAND
AND
THE QUALITIES WHICH ENDEAR
RESPECT

LONDON, MARCH 5TH, 1839.

PREFACE TO RICHELIEU

THE administration of Cardinal Richelieu, whom (despite all his darker qualities) Voltaire and History justly consider the true architect of the French monarchy, and the great parent of French civilization, is characterized by features alike tragic and comic. A weak king — an ambitious favourite; a despicable conspiracy against the minister, nearly always associated with a dangerous treason against the State: these, with little variety of names and dates, constitute the eventful cycle through which, with a dazzling ease and an arrogant confidence, the great luminary fulfilled its destinies. Blent together, in startling contrast, we see the grandest achievements and the pettiest agents; — the spy — the mistress — the capuchin; — the destruction of feudalism; — the humiliation of Austria; the dismemberment of Spain.

Richelieu himself is still what he was in his own day — a man of two characters. If, on the one hand, he is justly represented as inflexible and vindictive, crafty and unscrupulous; so, on the other, it cannot be denied that he was placed in times in which the long impunity of every license required stern examples — that he was beset by perils and intrigues, which gave a certain excuse to the subtlest inventions of self-defence — that his ambition was inseparably connected with a passionate love for the glory of his country — and that, if he was her dictator, he was not less her benefactor. It has been fairly remarked by the most impartial historians, that he was no less generous to merit than severe to crime — that, in the various departments of the State, the Army, and the Church, he selected and distinguished the ablest aspirants — that the wars which he conducted were, for the most part, essential to the preservation of France, and Europe itself, from the formidable encroachments of the Austrian House — that, in spite of those wars, the people were

not oppressed with exorbitant imposts — and that he left the kingdom he had governed in a more flourishing and vigorous state than at any former period of the French history, or at the decease of Louis XIV.

The cabals formed against this great statesman were not carried on by the patriotism of public virtue, or the emulation of equal talent: they were but Court struggles, in which the most worthless agents had recourse to the most desperate means. In each, as I have before observed, we see combined the twofold attempt to murder the minister and to betray the country. Such, then, are the agents, and such the designs, with which truth, in the Drama as in History, requires us to contrast the celebrated Cardinal; — not disguising his foibles or his vices, but not unjust to the grander qualities (especially the love of country), by which they were often dignified, and, at times, redeemed.

The historical drama is the concentration of historical events. In the attempt to place upon the stage the picture of an era, that license with dates and details, which Poetry permits, and which the highest authorities in the Drama of France herself have sanctioned, has been, though not unsparingly, indulged. The conspiracy of the Duc de Bouillon is, for instance, amalgamated with the dénouement of "The Day of Dupes"; and circumstances connected with the treason of Cinq Mars (whose brilliant youth and gloomy catastrophe tend to subvert poetic and historic justice by seducing us to forget his base ingratitude and his perfidious apostasy) are identified with the fate of the earlier favourite *Baradas*, whose sudden rise and as sudden fall passed into a proverb. I ought to add, that the noble romance of Cinq Mars suggested one of the scenes in the fifth act; and that for the conception of some portion of the intrigue connected with *De Mauprat* and *Julie*, I am, with great alterations of incident, and considerable if not entire reconstruction of character, indebted to an early and admirable novel by the author of "Picciola."

London, March, 1839.

NOTE

The length of the Play necessarily requires curtailments on the Stage — the passages thus omitted are those inserted with inverted commas. Many of the passages thus left out, however immaterial to the audience, must obviously be such as the reader would be least inclined to dispense with — *viz.*, those which, without being absolutely essential to the business of the Stage, contain either the subtler strokes of character, or the more poetical embellishments of description. A more important consequence of these suppressions is, that Richelieu himself is left too often and too unrelievedly to positions which place him in an *amiable* light, without that shadowing forth of his more sinister motives and his fiercer qualities which is attempted in the written play. Thus, the *character* takes a degree of credit due only to the *situation*. To judge the Author's conception of *Richelieu* fairly, and to estimate how far it is consistent with historical portraiture, the play must be *read*.

CAST OF RICHELIEU AS FIRST PRESENTED AT THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN

Louis, the Thirteenth		Mr. Elton
Gaston, Duke of Orleans	*brother to Louis XIII*	Mr. Diddear
Baradas	*favourite of the King, first gentleman of the Chamber, Premier, Ecuyer, etc.*	Mr. Warde
Cardinal Richelieu		Mr. Macready
The Chevalier de Mauprat		Mr. Anderson
The Sieur de Beringhen	*in attendance on the King,*[1] *one of the Conspirators*	Mr. Vining
Joseph	*a Capuchin, Richelieu's confidant*	Mr. Phelps
Huguet	*an officer of Richelieu's household guard — a spy*	Mr. George Bennett
François	*first Page to Richelieu*	Mr. Henry Howe
First Courtier		Mr. Roberts
Captain of the Archers		Mr. Matthews
Clermont		Mr. Tilbury
Secretaries of State		Mr. Yarnold Mr. Payne
Governor of the Bastile		Mr. Waldron
Gaoler		Mr. Ayliffe

Courtiers, Pages, Conspirators, Officers, Soldiers, etc.

Julie de Mortemar	*an Orphan, Ward to Richelieu*	Miss Helen Faucit
Marion de Lorme	*Mistress to Orleans, but in Richelieu's pay*	Miss Charles

[1] Properly speaking, the King's First Valet de Chambre, a post of great importance at that time.

RICHELIEU

ACT I

First Day

Scene First. — *A room in the house of* Marion de Lorme; — *a table towards the front of the stage (with wine, fruits, etc.), at which are seated* Baradas, *four* Courtiers, *splendidly dressed in the costume of* 1641–42; — *the* Duke of Orleans *reclining on a large fauteuil;* — Marion de Lorme, *standing at the back of his chair, offers him a goblet, and then retires. At another table,* De Beringhen, De Mauprat, *playing at dice; other* Courtiers, *of inferior rank to those at the table of the* Duke, *looking on.*

Orleans [*drinking*]. Here's to our enterprise! —

Baradas [*glancing at* Marion]. Hush, Sir! —

Orleans [*aside*]. Nay, Count,
You may trust her; she doats on me; no house
So safe as Marion's. "At our statelier homes
"The very walls do play the eaves-dropper.
"There's not a sunbeam creeping o'er our floors
"But seems a glance from that malignant eye
"Which reigns o'er France; our fatal greatness lives
"In the sharp glare of one relentless day.
"But Richelieu's self forgets to fear the sword
"The mirtle hides; and Marion's silken robe
"Casts its kind charity o'er fiercer sins
"Than those which haunt the rosy path between
"The lip and eye of beauty. Oh, no house
"So safe as Marion's."

Baradas. Still, we have a secret,
And oil and water — woman and a secret —
Are hostile properties.

Orleans. Well — Marion, see
How the play prospers yonder.

[Marion *goes to the next table, looks on for a few moments, then Exit*]

Baradas [*producing a parchment*]. I have now
All the conditions drawn; it only needs
Our signatures upon receipt of this,
(Whereto is joined the schedule of our treaty
With the Count-Duke, the Richelieu of the Escurial,)
Bouillon will join his army with the Spaniard,
March on to Paris, — there, dethrone the King:
You will be Regent; I, and ye, my Lords,
Form the new Council. So much for the core
Of our great scheme.

Orleans. But Richelieu is an Argus:
One of his hundred eyes will light upon us,
And then — good-bye to life.

Baradas. To gain the prize
We must destroy the Argus: — ay, my Lords,
The scroll the core, but blood must fill the veins
Of our design; — while this despatched to Bouillon,
Richelieu despatched to Heaven! — The last *my* charge.
Meet here to-morrow night. *You*, Sir, as first
In honour and in hope, meanwhile select
Some trusty knave to bear the scroll to Bouillon;
Midst Richelieu's foes *I'll* find some desperate hand
To strike for vengeance, while we stride to power.

Orleans. So be it; — to-morrow, midnight. —
Come, my Lords.

[*Exeunt* ORLEANS, *and the* COURTIERS *in his train. Those at the other table rise, salute* ORLEANS, *and re-seat themselves*]

DE BERINGHEN. Double the stakes.
DE MAUPRAT. Done.
DE BERINGHEN. Bravo; faith it shames me
To bleed a purse already *in extremis.*
DE MAUPRAT. Nay, as you've had the patient to yourself
So long, no other doctor should despatch it.

[DE MAUPRAT *throws and loses*]

OMNES. Lost! Ha, ha, — poor De Mauprat!
DE BERINGHEN. One throw more?
DE MAUPRAT. No, I am bankrupt [*pushing gold*] There goes all — except
My honour and my sword. [*They rise*]
DE BERINGHEN. Long cloaks and honour
Went out of vogue together, when we found
We got on much more rapidly without them;
The sword, indeed, is never out of fashion, —
The Devil has care of *that.*
FIRST GAMESTER. Ay, take the sword
To Cardinal Richelieu — he gives gold for steel,
When worn by brave men.
DE MAUPRAT. Richelieu!
DE BERINGHEN. [*To* BARADAS] At that name
He changes colour, bites his nether lip.
Ev'n in his brightest moments whisper "Richelieu,"
And you cloud all his sunshine.
BARADAS. I have mark'd it,
And I will learn the wherefore.
DE MAUPRAT. The Egyptian
Dissolved her richest jewel in a draught:
Would I could so melt time and all its treasures,
And drain it thus. [*Drinking*]
DE BERINGHEN. Come, gentlemen, what say ye,
A walk on the Parade?
OMNES. Ay, come, De Mauprat.
DE MAUPRAT. Pardon me; we shall meet again, ere nightfall.
BARADAS. I'll stay and comfort Mauprat.
DE BERINGHEN. Comfort! — when
We gallant fellows have run out a friend
There's nothing left — except to run him through!
There's the last act of friendship.
DE MAUPRAT. Let me keep
That favour in reserve; in all beside
Your most obedient servant.

[*Exeunt* DE BERINGHEN, *etc., Manent* DE MAUPRAT *and* BARADAS]

BARADAS. You have lost —
Yet are not sad.
DE MAUPRAT. Sad! — Life and gold have wings
And must fly one day: — open, then, their cages
And wish them merry.
BARADAS. You're a strange enigma: —
Fiery in war — and yet to glory lukewarm;
All mirth in action — in repose all gloom —
These are extremes in which the unconscious heart
Betrays the fever of deep-fix'd disease.
Confide in me! our young days roll'd together
In the same river, glassing the same stars
That smile i' the heaven of hope; — alike we made
Bright-winged steeds of our unform'd chimeras,
Spurring the fancies upward to the air,
Wherein we shaped fair castles from the cloud,
Fortune of late has sever'd us, and led
Me to the rank of Courtier, Count, and Favourite —
You to the titles of the wildest gallant
And bravest knight in France; — are you content?
No; — trust in me — some gloomy secret —
DE MAUPRAT. Ay: —
A secret that doth haunt me, as, of old,
Men were possess'd of fiends? Where'er I turn,
The grave yawns dark before me! I *will* trust you; —
Hating the Cardinal, and beguiled by Orleans,
You know I join'd the Languedoc revolt —
Was captured — sent to the Bastile —
BARADAS. But shared
The general pardon, which the Duke of Orleans
Won for himself and all in the revolt,
Who but obey'd his orders.

DE MAUPRAT. Note the phrase; —
"*Obey'd his orders.*" Well, when on my way
To join the Duke in Languedoc, I (then
The down upon my lip — less man than boy)
Leading young valours — reckless as myself,
Seized on the town of Faviaux, and displaced
The Royal banners for the Rebel. Orleans,
(Never too daring) when I reach'd the camp,
Blamed me for acting — mark — *without his orders:*
Upon this quibble Richelieu razed my name
Out of the general pardon.

BARADAS. Yet released you
From the Bastile —

DE MAUPRAT. To call me to his presence,
And thus address me; — "You have seized a town
Of France, without the orders of your leader,
And for this treason, but one sentence — DEATH."

BARADAS. Death!

DE MAUPRAT. "I have pity on your youth and birth,
Nor wish to glut the headsman; — join your troop,
Now on the march against the Spaniards; — change
The traitor's scaffold for the Soldier's grave; —
Your memory stainless — they who shared your crime
Exil'd or dead, — your king shall never learn it."

BARADAS. O tender pity! — O most charming prospect!
Blown into atoms by a bomb, or drill'd
Into a cullender by gunshot! — Well?—

DE MAUPRAT. You have heard if I fought bravely. — Death became
Desired as Daphne by the eager Day-god.
Like him I chas'd the nymph — to grasp the laurel!
I could not die!

BARADAS. Poor Fellow!

DE MAUPRAT. When the Cardinal
Review'd the troops — his eye met mine; — he frown'd,
Summon'd me forth — "How's this?" quoth he; "you have shunn'd
The sword — beware the axe! — 'twill fall one day!"
He left me thus — we were recalled to Paris,
And — you know all!

BARADAS. And, knowing this, why halt you,
Spell'd by the rattlesnake, — while in the breasts
Of your firm friends beat hearts, that vow the death
Of your grim tyrant? — wake! — Be one of us;
The time invites — the King detests the Cardinal,
Dares not disgrace, — but groans to be deliver'd
Of that too great a subject — join your friends,
Free France and save yourself.

DE MAUPRAT. Hush! Richelieu bears
A charmed life: — to all who have braved his power,
One common end — the block.

BARADAS. Nay, if he live,
The block your doom!

DE MAUPRAT. Better the victim, Count,
Than the assassin — France requires a Richelieu,
But does not need a Mauprat. Truce to this; —
All time one midnight, where my thoughts are spectres.
What to me fame? — What love? —

BARADAS. Yet dost thou love *not?*

DE MAUPRAT. Love? — I am young —

BARADAS. And Julie fair! [*Aside*] It is so,
Upon the margin of the grave — his hand
Would pluck the rose that I would win and wear!
"[*Aloud*] Thou lovest —

"DE MAUPRAT. Who, lonely in the midnight tent,
"Gazed on the watch-fires in the sleepless air,
"Nor chose one star amidst the clustering hosts
"To bless it in the name of some fair face
"Set in his spirit, as the star in Heaven?
"For our divine Affections, like the Spheres,
"Move ever, ever musical.

"BARADAS. You speak
"As one who fed on poetry.

"DE MAUPRAT. Why, man,
"The thoughts of lovers stir with poetry

"As leaves with summer wind. — The heart that loves
"Dwells in an Eden, hearing angellutes,
"As Eve in the First Garden. Hadst thou seen
"My Julie, and not felt it henceforth dull
"To live in the common world — and talk in words
"That clothe the feelings of the frigid herd? —
"Upon the perfumed pillow of her lips —
"As on his native bed of roses flush'd
"With Paphian skies — Love smiling sleeps: — Her voice
"The blest interpreter of thoughts as pure
"As virgin wells where Dian takes delight,
"Or Fairies dip their changelings! — In the maze
"Of her harmonious beauties — Modestly
"(Like some severer Grace that leads the choir
"Of her sweet sisters) every airy motion
"Attunes to such chaste charm, that Passion holds
"His burning breath, and will not with a sigh
"Dissolve the spell that binds him! — Oh those eyes
"That woo the earth — shadowing more soul than lurks
"Under the lids of Psyche! — Go! — thy lip
"Curls at the purfled phrases of a lover —
"Love thou, and if thy love be deep as mine,
"Thou wilt not laugh at poets.

"BARADAS [*aside*]. With each word
"Thou wak'st a jealous demon in my heart,
"And my hand clutches at my hilt —"

DE MAUPRAT [*gaily*]. No more! —
I love! — Your breast holds both my secrets; — Never
Unbury either! — Come, while yet we may,
We'll bask us in the noon of rosy life: —
Lounge through the gardens, — flaunt it in the taverns, —
Laugh, — game, — drink, — feast; — If so confine my days,
Faith, I'll enclose the nights. — Pshaw! not so grave;
I'm a true Frenchman! — *Vive la bagatelle!*

[*As they are going out enter* HUGUET *and four* ARQUEBUSIERS]

HUGUET. Messire De Mauprat, — I arrest you! — Follow
To the Lord Cardinal.

DE MAUPRAT. You see, my friend,
I'm out of my suspense — The tiger's play'd
Long enough with his prey. — Farewell! — Hereafter
Say, when men name me, "Adrien de Mauprat
Lived without hope, and perished without fear!"

[*Exeunt* DE MAUPRAT, HUGUET, *etc.*]

BARADAS. Farewell! — I trust forever! I design'd thee
For Richelieu's murderer — but, as well his martyr!
In childhood you the stronger — and I cursed you;
In youth the fairer — and I cursed you still;
And now my rival! While the name of Julie
Hung on thy lips — I smiled — for then I saw
In my mind's eye, the cold and grinning Death
Hang o'er thy head the pall! — Ambition, Love,
Ye twin-born stars of daring destinies,
Sit in my house of Life! — By the King's aid
I will be Julie's husband — in despite
Of my Lord Cardinal — By the King's aid
I will be minister of France — spite
Of my Lord Cardinal; — and then — what then?
The King loves Julie — feeble prince — false master —

[*Producing and gazing on the parchment*]

Then, by the aid of Bouillon and the Spaniard,
I will dethrone the King; and all — ha! — ha! —
All, in despite of my Lord Cardinal.

[*Exit*]

SCENE SECOND. — *A room in the Palais Cardinal, the walls hung with arras. A large screen in one corner. A table covered with books, papers, &c. A rude clock in a recess. Busts, statues, bookcases, weapons of different periods, and banners suspended over* RICHELIEU'S *chair.*

[RICHELIEU *and* JOSEPH]

RICHELIEU. And so you think this new conspiracy
The craftiest trap yet laid for the old fox? —
Fox! — Well, I like the nickname! What did Plutarch
Say of the Greek Lysander?
JOSEPH. I forget.
RICHELIEU. That where the lion's skin fell short, he eked it
Out with the fox's. A great statesman, Joseph,
That same Lysander?
JOSEPH. Orleans heads the traitors.
RICHELIEU. A very wooden head then! Well?
JOSEPH. The favourite,
Count Baradas —
RICHELIEU. A weed of hasty growth,
First gentleman of the chamber, — titles, lands,
And the King's ear! — it cost me six long winters
To mount as high, as in six little moons
This painted lizard — But I hold the ladder,
And when I shake — he falls! What more?
JOSEPH. A scheme
To make your orphan-ward an instrument
To aid your foes. You placed her with the Queen,
One of the royal chamber, — as a watch
I' th' enemy's quarters —
RICHELIEU. And the silly child
Visits me daily, — calls me "Father," — prays
Kind heaven to bless me — And for all the rest,
As well have placed a doll about the Queen!
She does not heed who frowns — who smiles; with whom
The King confers in whispers; notes not when
Men who last week were foes, are found in corners
Mysteriously affectionate; words spoken
Within closed doors she never hears; — by chance
Taking the air at keyholes — Senseless puppet!
No ears — nor eyes! — and yet she says — "She loves me!"
Go on —
JOSEPH. Your ward has charm'd the King.
RICHELIEU. Out on you!
Have I not, one by one, from such fair shoots
Pluck'd the insidious ivy of his love?
And shall it creep around my blossoming tree
Where innocent thoughts, like happy birds, make music
That spirits in Heaven might hear? They're sinful too,
Those passionate surfeits of the rampant flesh,
The Church condemns them; and to us, my Joseph,
The props and pillars of the Church, most hurtful.
The King is weak — whoever the King loves
Must rule the King; the lady loves another,
The other rules the lady — thus we're balked
Of our own proper sway — The King must have
No Goddess but the State: — the State — That's Richelieu!
JOSEPH. This not the worst; — Louis, in all decorous,
And deeming you her least compliant guardian,
Would veil his suit by marriage with his minion,
Your prosperous foe, Count Baradas.
RICHELIEU. Ha! ha!
I have another bride for Baradas!
JOSEPH. You, my lord?
RICHELIEU. Ay — more faithful than the love
Of fickle woman: — when the head lies lowliest,
Clasping him fondest; — Sorrow never knew
So sure a soother, — and her bed is stainless!
JOSEPH [*aside*]. If of the grave he speaks I do not wonder
That priests are bachelors!

[*Enter* FRANÇOIS]

FRANÇOIS. Mademoiselle De Mortemar.
RICHELIEU. Most opportune — admit her. [*Exit* FRANÇOIS]
In my closet
You'll find a rosary, Joseph; ere you tell
Three hundred beads, I'll summon you. — Stay, Joseph;
I did omit an Ave in my matins, —
A grievous fault; — atone it for me, Joseph;
There is a scourge within; I am weak, you strong,
It were but charity to take my sin

On such broad shoulders. Exercise is healthful.

JOSEPH. I! guilty of such criminal presumption
As to mistake myself for you. — No, never!
Think it not. — [*Aside*] Troth, a pleasant invitation! [*Exit* JOSEPH]

[*Enter* JULIE DE MORTEMAR]

RICHELIEU. That's my sweet Julie! why, upon this face
Blushes such daybreak, one might swear the Morning
Were come to visit Tithon.

JULIE [*placing herself at his feet*]. Are you gracious?
May I say "Father?"

RICHELIEU. Now and ever!

JULIE. Father!
A sweet word to an orphan.

RICHELIEU. No; not orphan
While Richelieu lives; thy father loved me well;
My friend, ere I had flatterers (now, I'm great,
In other phrase, I'm friendless) — he died young
In years, not service, and bequeathed thee to me;
And thou shalt have a dowry, girl, to buy
Thy mate amidst the mightiest. Drooping? — sighs? —
Art thou not happy at the Court?

JULIE. Not often.

RICHELIEU [*aside*]. Can she love Baradas? — Ah! at thy heart
There's what can smile and sigh, blush and grow pale,
All in a breath! — Thou art admired — art young;
Does not his Majesty commend thy beauty —
Ask thee to sing to him? and swear such sounds
Had smooth'd the brows of Saul? —

JULIE. He's very tiresome,
Our worthy King.

RICHELIEU. Fie; kings are never tiresome,
Save to their ministers. — What courtly gallants
Charm ladies most? De Sourdiac, Longueville, or
The favourite Baradas?

JULIE. A smileless man —
I fear, and shun him.

RICHELIEU. Yet he courts thee?

JULIE. Then
He is more tiresome than his Majesty.

RICHELIEU. Right, girl, shun Baradas. — Yet of these flowers
Of France, not one, in whose more honied breath
Thy heart hears Summer whisper?

[*Enter* HUGUET]

HUGUET. The Chevalier
De Mauprat waits below.

JULIE [*starting up*]. De Mauprat!

RICHELIEU. Hem!
He has been tiresome, too. — Anon. [*Exit* HUGUET]

JULIE. What doth he? —
I mean — I — Does your Eminence — that is —
Know you Messire de Mauprat?

RICHELIEU. Well! — and you —
Has he address'd you often?

JULIE. Often! No, —
Nine times; — nay, ten! — the last time, by the lattice
Of the great staircase. [*In a melancholy tone*] The Court sees him rarely.

RICHELIEU. A bold and forward royster?

JULIE. *He?* — nay, modest,
Gentle, and sad methinks.

RICHELIEU. Wears gold and azure?

JULIE. No; sable.

RICHELIEU. So you note his colours, Julie?
Shame on you, child, look loftier. By the mass
I have business with this modest gentleman.

JULIE. You're angry with poor Julie. There's no cause.

RICHELIEU. No cause — you hate my foes?

JULIE. I do!

RICHELIEU. Hate Mauprat!

JULIE. Not Mauprat. No, not Adrien, father?

RICHELIEU. Adrien!
Familiar! — Go, child; no, — not *that* way; — wait
In the tapestry chamber; I will join you — go.

JULIE. His brows are knit; — I dare not call him father!
But I *must* speak — Your Eminence —

RICHELIEU [*sternly*]. Well! girl!

JULIE. Nay
Smile on me — one smile more; there, now I'm happy.
Do not rank De Mauprat with your foes; he is not,
I know he is not, he loves France too well.

RICHELIEU. Not rank De Mauprat with my foes? So be it.
I'll blot him from that list.
JULIE. That's my own father.
[*Exit* JULIE]
RICHELIEU [*ringing a small bell on the table*]. Huguet!

[*Enter* HUGUET]

De Mauprat struggled not, nor murmur'd?
HUGUET. No; proud and passive.
RICHELIEU. Bid him enter. — Hold:
Look that he hide no weapon. Humph, despair
Makes victims sometimes victors. When he has enter'd,
Glide round unseen; — place thyself yonder [*pointing to the screen*]; watch him;
If he show violence — (let me see thy carbine;
So, a good weapon) — if he play the lion,
Why — the dog's death.
HUGUET. I never miss my mark.

[*Exit* HUGUET; RICHELIEU *seats himself at the table, and slowly arranges the papers before him. Enter* DE MAUPRAT, *preceded by* HUGUET, *who then retires behind the screen*]

RICHELIEU. Approach, Sir. — Can you call to mind the hour,
Now three years since, when in this room, methinks,
Your presence honour'd me?
DE MAUPRAT. It is, my Lord,
One of my most —
RICHELIEU [*drily*]. Delightful recollections.
DE MAUPRAT [*aside*]. St. Denis! doth he make a jest of axe
And headsman?
RICHELIEU [*sternly*]. I did then accord you
A mercy ill requited — you still live?
"DE MAUPRAT. To meet death face to face at last.
"RICHELIEU. Your words
"Are bold.
"DE MAUPRAT. My deeds have not belied them.
"RICHELIEU. Deeds!
"O miserable delusion of man's pride!
"Deeds! cities sack'd, fields ravaged, hearths profaned,
"Men butcher'd! In your hour of doom behold
"The *deeds* you boast of! From rank showers of blood,
"And the red light of blazing roofs, you build
"The Rainbow Glory, and to shuddering Conscience
"Cry, — Lo, the Bridge to Heaven?
"DE MAUPRAT. If war be sinful,
"Your hand the gauntlet cast.
"RICHELIEU. It was so, Sir.
"Note the distinction: — I weigh'd well the cause
"Which made the standard holy; raised the war
"But to secure the peace. France bled — I groan'd;
"But look'd beyond; and, in the vista, saw
"France saved, and I exulted. You — but you
"Were but the tool of slaughter — knowing nought,
"Foreseeing nought, nought hoping, nought lamenting,
"And for nought fit, — save cutting throats for hire.
"Deeds, marry, deeds!
"DE MAUPRAT. If you would deign to speak
"Thus to your armies ere they march to battle,
"Perchance your Eminence might have the pain
"Of the throat-cutting to yourself.
"RICHELIEU [*aside*]. He has wit,
"This Mauprat —[*Aloud*] Let it pass; there is against you
"What you can less excuse." Messire de Mauprat
Doom'd to sure death, how hast thou since consumed
The time allotted thee for serious thought
And solemn penitence?
DE MAUPRAT [*embarrassed*]. The time, my Lord?
RICHELIEU. Is not the question plain? I'll answer for thee:
Thou hast sought nor priest nor shrine; no sackcloth chafed
Thy delicate flesh. The rosary and the death's-head
Have not, with pious meditation, purged
Earth from the carnal gaze. What thou hast *not* done
Brief told; what done, a volume! Wild debauch,
Turbulent riot: — for the morn the dice-box —
Noon claim'd the duel — and the night the wassail:

These, your most holy, pure preparatives
For death and judgment. Do I wrong you, Sir?

De Mauprat. I was not always thus: — if chang'd my nature
Blame that which changed my fate. — Alas, my Lord,
"There is a brotherhood which calm-eyed Reason,
"Can wot not of betwixt Despair and Mirth.
"My birth-place mid the vines of sunny Provence,
"Perchance the stream that sparkles in my veins,
"Came from that wine of passionate life which, erst,
"Glow'd in the wild heart of the Troubadour:
"And danger, which makes steadier courage wary,
"But fevers me with an insane delight;
"As one of old who on the mountain-crags
"Caught madness from a Mænad's haunting eyes.
"Were you, my Lord, — whose path imperial power,
"And the grave cares of reverent wisdom guard
"From all that tempts to folly meaner men, — "
Were you accursed with that which you inflicted
By bed and board, dogg'd by one ghastly spectre —
The while within you youth beat high, and life
Grew lovelier from the neighbouring frown of death —
The heart no bud, nor fruit — save in those seeds
Most worthless, which spring up, bloom, bear, and wither
In the same hour — Were this your fate, perchance
You wou'd have err'd like me!

Richelieu. I might, like you,
Have been a brawler and a reveller; — not,
Like you trickster and a thief. —

De Mauprat [*advancing threateningly*]. Lord Cardinal! —
Unsay those words!

[Huguet *deliberately raises his carbine*]

Richelieu [*waving his hand*]. Not quite so quick, friend Huguet;
Messire de Mauprat is a patient man,
And he can wait! —
You have outrun your fortune; —
I blame you not, that you would be a beggar —
Each to his taste! — But I do charge you, Sir,
That, being beggar'd, you would coin false monies
Out of that crucible, called Debt. — To live
On means not yours — be brave in silks and laces,
Gallant in steeds — splendid in banquets; — all
Not *yours* — ungiven — unherited — unpaid for; —
This is to be a trickster; and to filch
Men's art and labour, which to them is wealth,
Life, daily bread — quitting all scores with — "Friend,
You're troublesome!" — Why this, forgive me,
Is what — when done with a less dainty grace —
Plain folks call "*Theft!*" You owe eight thousand pistoles,
Minus one crown, two liards! —

De Mauprat [*aside*]. The old conjuror! —
'Sdeath, he'll inform me next how many cups
I drank at dinner! —

Richelieu. This is scandalous,
Shaming your birth and blood. — I tell you, Sir,
That you must pay your debts. —

De Mauprat. With all my heart,
My Lord. — Where shall I borrow, then, the money?

Richelieu [*aside and laughing*]. A humorous dare-devil! — The very man
To suit my purpose — ready, frank, and bold! [*Rising and earnestly*]
Adrien de Mauprat, men have called me cruel; —
I am not; — I am *just!* — I found France rent asunder, —
The rich men despots, and the poor banditti; —
Sloth in the mart, and schism within the temple;
Brawls festering to Rebellion; and weak Laws
Rotting away with rust in antique sheaths. —
I have re-created France; and, from the ashes
Of the old feudal and decrepit carcase,
Civilization on her luminous wings
Soars, phœnix-like, to Jove! What was my art?

Genius, some say — some, Fortune, — Witchcraft, some.
Not so; — my art was JUSTICE! Force and Fraud
Misname it cruelty — you shall confute them!
My champion You! You met me as your foe,
Depart my friend. — You shall not die. — France needs you.
You shall wipe off all stains — be rich, be honour'd,
Be great —

[DE MAUPRAT *falls on his knee*, RICHELIEU *raises him*]

I ask, Sir, in return, this hand,
To gift it with a bride, whose dower shall match,
Yet not exceed, her beauty.

DE MAUPRAT. I, my Lord, [*hesitating*]
I have no wish to marry.

RICHELIEU. Surely, Sir,
To die were worse.

DE MAUPRAT. Scarcely; the poorest coward
Must die, — but knowingly to march to marriage —
My Lord, it asks the courage of a lion!

RICHELIEU. Traitor, thou triflest with me! — I know *all!*
Thou hast dared to love my ward — my charge.

DE MAUPRAT. As rivers
May love the sunlight — basking in the beams,
And hurrying on! —

RICHELIEU. Thou hast told her of thy love?

DE MAUPRAT. My Lord, if I had dared to love a maid,
Lowliest in France, I would not so have wrong'd her
As bid her link rich life and virgin hope
With one, the deathman's gripe might, from her side
Pluck at the nuptial altar.

RICHELIEU. I believe thee;
Yet since she knows not of thy love, renounce her;
Take life and fortune with another! — Silent?

DE MAUPRAT. Your fate has been one triumph. — You know not
How bless'd a thing it was in my dark hour
To nurse the one sweet thought you bid me banish.
Love hath no need of words; — nor less within
That holiest temple — the heaven-builded soul —
Breathes the recorded vow — Base knight, — false lover
Were he, who barter'd all, that brighten'd grief
Or sanctified despair, for life and gold.
Revoke your mercy; — I prefer the fate
I look'd for!

RICHELIEU. Huguet! To the tapestry chamber
Conduct your prisoner.
[*To* MAUPRAT] You will there behold
The executioner: — your doom be private —
And Heaven have mercy on you!

DE MAUPRAT. When I'm dead,
Tell her, I loved her.

RICHELIEU. Keep such follies, Sir,
For fitter ears; — go —

DE MAUPRAT. Does he mock me?

[*Exeunt* DE MAUPRAT *and* HUGUET]

RICHELIEU. Joseph,
Come forth.

[*Enter* JOSEPH]

Methinks your cheek hath lost its rubies;
I fear you have been too lavish of the flesh;
The scorge is heavy.

JOSEPH. Pray you, change the subject.

RICHELIEU. You good men are so modest! — Well, to business!
Go instantly — deeds — notaries! bid my stewards
Arrange my house by the Luxembourg — *my* house
No more! — a bridal present to my ward,
Who weds to-morrow.

JOSEPH. Weds, with whom?

RICHELIEU. De Mauprat.

JOSEPH. Penniless husband!

RICHELIEU. Bah! the mate for beauty
Should be a man, and not a money-chest!
When her brave sire lay on his bed of death,
I vow'd to be a father to his Julie; —
And so he died — the smile upon his lips! —
And when I spared the life of her young lover,
Methought I saw that smile again! Who else,
Look you, in all the Court — who else so well,

Brave, or supplant the favourite; — balk the King —
Baffle their schemes? — I have tried him: — He has honour
And courage; — qualities that eagle plume
Men's souls — and fit them for the fiercest sun,
Which ever melted the weak waxen minds
That flutter in the beams of gaudy Power!
Besides, he has taste, this Mauprat: — When my play
Was acted to dull tiers of lifeless gapers,
Who had no soul for poetry, I saw him
Applaud in the proper places; trust me, Joseph,
He is a man of an uncommon promise!

JOSEPH. And yet your foe.

RICHELIEU. Have I not foes enow? —
Great men gain doubly when they make foes friends.
Remember my grand maxims: — First employ
All methods to conciliate.

JOSEPH. Failing these?

RICHELIEU [*fiercely*]. All means to crush; as with the opening, and
The clenching of this little hand, I will
Crush the small venom of these stinging courtiers,
So, so we've baffled Baradas.

JOSEPH. And when
Check the conspiracy?

RICHELIEU. Check, check? Full way to it.
Let it bud, ripen, flaunt i' the day, and burst
To fruit, — the Dead Sea's fruit of ashes; ashes
Which I will scatter to the winds.
Go, Joseph;
When you return, I have a feast for you:
The last great act of my great play; the verses
Methinks are fine, — ah, very fine. — *You* write
Verses! — [*aside*] *such* verses! — You have wit, discernment.

JOSEPH. [*aside*]. Worse than the scourge! Strange that so great a statesman
Should be so bad a poet.

RICHELIEU. What dost say?

JOSEPH. That it is strange so great a statesman should
Be so sublime a poet.

RICHELIEU. Ah, you rogue;
Laws die, Books never. Of my ministry
I am not vain; but of my muse, I own it.
Come, you shall hear the verses now.
[*Takes up a MS.*]

JOSEPH. My Lord,
The deeds, the notaries!

RICHELIEU. True, I pity you;
But business first, then pleasure.
[*Exit* JOSEPH]
[*Seats himself, and reading*]
Ah sublime!

[*Enter* DE MAUPRAT *and* JULIE]

DE MAUPRAT. Oh, speak, my Lord — I dare not think you mock me,
And yet —

RICHELIEU. Hush, hush — this line must be considered!

JULIE. Are we not both your children?

RICHELIEU. What a couplet!
How now! Oh, sir — you live! —

DE MAUPRAT. Why, no, methinks,
Elysium is not life!

JULIE. He smiles! — you smile,
My father! From my heart for ever, now,
I'll blot the name of orphan!

RICHELIEU. Rise, my children,
For ye are mine — mine both; — and in your sweet
And young delight — your love — (life's first-born glory)
My own lost youth breathes musical!

DE MAUPRAT. I'll seek
Temple and priest henceforward; — were it but
To learn Heaven's choicest blessings.

RICHELIEU. Thou shalt seek
Temple and priest right soon; the morrow's sun
Shall see across these barren thresholds pass
The fairest bride in Paris. Go, my children:
Even *I* loved once. — Be lovers while ye may.
How is it with you, Sir? You bear it bravely;
You know, it asks the courage of a lion.
[*Exeunt* DE MAUPRAT *and* JULIE]
Oh, godlike Power! Woe, Rapture, Penury, Wealth, —
Marriage and Death, for one infirm old man
Through a great empire to dispense — withhold —
As the will whispers! And shall things — like motes

That live in my daylight — lackies of court wages,
Dwarf'd starvelings — manikins, upon whose shoulders
The burthen of a province were a load
More heavy than the globe on Atlas — cast
Lots for my robes and sceptre? France, I love thee!
All Earth shall never pluck thee from my heart!
My mistress France — my wedded wife — sweet France,
Who shall proclaim divorce for thee and me! [*Exit* RICHELIEU]

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SECOND DAY

SCENE FIRST. — *A splendid Apartment in* MAUPRAT'S *new House. Casements opening to the Gardens, beyond which the domes of the Luxembourg Palace.*

[*Enter* BARADAS]

BARADAS. Mauprat's new home: — too splendid for a soldier!
But o'er his floors — the while I stalk — methinks
My shadow spreads gigantic to the gloom
The old rude towers of the Bastile cast far
Along the smoothness of the jocund day.
Well, thou hast 'scaped the fierce caprice of Richelieu;
But art thou farther from the headsman, fool?
Thy secret I have whisper'd to the King; —
Thy marriage makes the King thy foe. Thou stand'st
On the abyss — and in the pool below
I see a ghastly, headless phantom mirror'd:
Thy likeness ere the marriage moon hath waned.
Meanwhile — meanwhile — ha, ha — if thou art wedded
Thou art not wived.

[*Enter* MAUPRAT, *splendidly dressed*]

DE MAUPRAT. Was ever fate like mine?
So blest, and yet so wretched!

BARADAS. Joy, de Mauprat!
Why, what a brow, man, for your wedding-day!

DE MAUPRAT. Jest not. — Distraction!

BARADAS. What, your wife a shrew
Already? Courage, man — the common lot!

DE MAUPRAT. Oh, that she were less lovely, or less loved!

BARADAS. Riddles again!

DE MAUPRAT. You know what chanced between
The Cardinal and myself.

BARADAS. This morning brought
Your letter — a strange account! I laugh'd
And wept at once for gladness.

DE MAUPRAT. We were wed
At noon — the rite performed, came hither — scarce
Arrived, when —

BARADAS. Well? —

DE MAUPRAT. Wide flew the doors, and lo,
Messire de Beringhen, and this epistle!

BARADAS. 'Tis the King's hand! — the royal seal!

DE MAUPRAT. Read — read!

BARADAS [*reading*]. "Whereas, Adrien de Mauprat, Colonel and Chevalier in our armies, being already guilty of high treason, by the seizure of our town of Faviaux, has presumed, without our knowledge, consent, or sanction, to connect himself by marriage with Julie de Mortemar, a wealthy orphan attached to the person of Her Majesty, without our knowledge or consent — We do hereby proclaim and declare the said marriage contrary to law. On penalty of death, Adrien de Mauprat will not communicate with the said Julie de Mortemar by word or letter, save in the presence of our faithful servant, the Sieur de Beringhen, and then with such respect and decorum as are due to a Demoiselle attached to the Court of France, until such time as it may suit our royal pleasure to confer with the Holy Church on the formal annulment of the marriage, and with our Council on the punishment to be awarded to Messire de Mauprat, who is cautioned for his own sake to preserve silence as to our injunction, more especially to Mademoiselle de Mortemar. Given under our hand and seal at the Louvre. LOUIS." [*Returning the letter*].
Amazement! — Did not Richelieu say, the King
Knew not your crime?

DE MAUPRAT. He said so.
BARADAS. Poor de Mauprat!
See you the snare, the vengeance worse than death,
Of which you are the victim?
DE MAUPRAT. Ha!
BARADAS [*aside*]. It works!
[JULIE *and* DE BERINGHEN *in the Gardens*]
You have not sought the Cardinal yet, to —
DE MAUPRAT. No!
Scarce yet my sense awaken'd from the shock;
Now I will seek him.
BARADAS. Hold — beware! Stir not
Till we confer again.
DE MAUPRAT. Speak out, man!
BARADAS. Hush!
Your wife! — De Beringhen! — Be on your guard.
Obey the royal orders to the letter.
I'll look around your palace. By my troth,
A princely mansion!
DE MAUPRAT. Stay —
BARADAS. So new a bridegroom
Can want no visitors. — Your Servant, Madam.
Oh, happy pair — oh, charming picture!
[*Exit through a side door*]
JULIE. Adrien,
You left us suddenly — are you not well?
DE MAUPRAT. Oh, very well — that is — extremely ill.
JULIE. Ill, Adrien?
[*Taking his hand*]
DE MAUPRAT. Not when I see thee.

[*He is about to lift her hand to his lips, when* DE BERINGHEN *coughs, and pulls his mantle.* DE MAUPRAT *drops the hand, and walks away*]

JULIE. Alas!
Should he not love me?
DE BERINGHEN [*aside*]. Have a care, I must
Report each word, each gesture to his Majesty.
DE MAUPRAT. Sir, if you were not in his Majesty's service,
You'd be the most officious, impudent,
Damn'd busy-body ever interfering
In a man's family affairs.
DE BERINGHEN. But as
I do belong, Sir, to his Majesty —
DE MAUPRAT. You're lucky! — Still, were we a story higher,
'Twere prudent not to go too near the window.
JULIE. Adrien, what have I done? Say, am I changed
Since yesterday? — or was it but for wealth,
Ambition, life — that — that — you swore you loved me?
DE MAUPRAT. I shall go mad! I do, indeed I do —
DE BERINGHEN [*aside*]. Not love her! that were highly disrespectful.
JULIE. You do — what, Adrien?
DE MAUPRAT. Oh! I do, indeed —
I do think, that this weather is delightful!
A charming day! the sky is so serene!
And what a prospect! — [*To* DE BERINGHEN] Oh! you Popinjay!
JULIE. He jests at me! — he mocks me! — yet I love him,
And every look becomes the lips we love!
Perhaps I am too grave? — You laugh at Julie;
If laughter please you, welcome be the music!
Only say, Adrien, that you love me.
DE MAUPRAT [*kissing her hand*]. Ay;
With my whole heart I love you! —
Now, Sir, go,
And tell that to his Majesty! Whoever
Heard of its being a state-offence to kiss
The hand of one's own wife?
JULIE. He says he loves me,
And starts away, as if to say "I love you"
Meant something *very* dreadful. — Come, sit by me, —
I place your chair! — fie on your gallantry!
[*They sit down; as he pushes his chair back, she draws hers nearer*]
Why must this strange Messire de Beringhen
Be always here? He never takes a hint.
Do you not wish him gone?
DE MAUPRAT. Upon my soul
I do, my Julie! — Send him for your *bouquet*,
Your glove, your — anything —
JULIE. Messire de Beringhen,
I dropp'd my glove in the gardens by the fountain,
Or the alcove, or — stay — no, by the statue
Of Cupid; may I ask you to —
DE BERINGHEN. To send for it?

Certainly. [*Ringing a bell on the table*]
André, Pierre, (you rascals, how
Do ye call them?)

[*Enter* SERVANTS]

Ah — *Madame* has dropp'd her glove
In the gardens, by the fountain, or the alcove;
Or — stay — no, by the statue — eh? — of Cupid.
Bring it.

DE MAUPRAT. Did ever now one pair of shoulders
Carry such waggon-loads of impudence
Into a gentleman's drawing-room?
Dear Julie,
I'm busy — letters — visitors — the devil!
I do beseech you leave me — I say — leave me.

JULIE [*weeping*]. You are unkind. [*Exit*]

[*As she goes out*, MAUPRAT *drops on one knee, and kisses the hem of her mantle, unseen by her*]

DE BERINGHEN. Ten millions of apologies —

DE MAUPRAT. I'll not take one of them. I have, as yet,
Withstood, all things — my heart — my love — my rights.
But Julie's tears! — When is this farce to end?

DE BERINGHEN. Oh! when you please. His Majesty requests me,
As soon as you infringe his gracious orders,
To introduce you to the Governor
Of the Bastile. I should have had that honour
Before, but, gad, my foible is good nature.
One can't be hard upon a friend's infirmities.

DE MAUPRAT. I know the King can send me to the scaffold.
Dark prospect! — but I'm used to it; and if
The Church and Council, by this hour to-morrow,
One way or other settle not the matter,
I will —

DE BERINGHEN. What, my dear Sir?

DE MAUPRAT. Show you the door,
My dear, dear Sir; talk as I please, with whom
I please, in my own house, dear Sir, until
His Majesty shall condescend to find
A stouter gentleman than you, dear Sir,
To take me out: and now you understand me,
My dear, most dear — Oh, damnably dear Sir!

DE BERINGHEN. What! almost in a passion! you will cool
Upon reflection. Well, since *Madame's* absent,
I'll take a small refreshment. Now, don't stir;
Be careful; — how's your burgundy? — I'll taste it —
Finish it all before I leave. Nay,
No form; — you see I make myself at home. [*Exit* DE BERINGHEN]

DE MAUPRAT [*going to the door, through which* BARADAS *had passed*]. Baradas! Count!

[*Enter* BARADAS]

You spoke of snares — of vengeance
Sharper than death — be plainer.

BARADAS. What so clear?
Richelieu has but two passions —

DE MAUPRAT. Richelieu!

BARADAS. Yes!
Ambition and revenge — in you both blended.
First for ambition — Julie is his ward,
Innocent — docile — pliant to his will —
He placed her at the Court — foresaw the rest —
The King loves Julie!

DE MAUPRAT. Merciful Heaven! The King!

BARADAS. Such Cupids lend new plumes to Richelieu's wings:
But the Court etiquette must give such Cupids
The veil of Hymen —(Hymen but in name).
He looked abroad — found you his foe; — *thus* served
Ambition — by the grandeur of his ward.
And vengeance — by dishonour to his foe!

DE MAUPRAT. Prove this.

BARADAS. You have the proof — The royal Letter: —
Your strange exemption from the general pardon,
Known but to me and Richelieu; can you doubt
Your friend to acquit your foe? The truth is glaring —
Richelieu alone could tell the princely lover
The tale which sells your life, — or buys your honour!

De Mauprat. I see it all! Mock pardon — hurried nuptials!
False bounty! — all! — the serpent of that smile!
Oh! it stings home!

Baradas. You yet shall crush his malice;
Our plans are sure: — Orleans is at our head;
We meet to-night; join us, and with us triumph.

De Mauprat. To-night? — Oh Heaven! — my marriage night! — Revenge!

"Baradas. What class of men, whose white lips do not curse
"The grim, insatiate, universal tyrant?
"We, noble-born — where are our antique rights —
"Our feudal seignories — our castled strength,
"That did divide us from the base Plebeians
"And made our swords our law — where are they? — trod
"To dust — and o'er the graves of our dead power
"Scaffolds are monuments — the Kingly House
"Shorn of its beams — the Royal Sun of France
"'Clips'd by this blood-red comet. Where we turn,
"Nothing but Richelieu! — Armies — Church — State — Laws
"But mirrors that do multiply his beams.
"He sees all — acts all — Argus and Briaræus —
"Spy at our boards — and death's-man at our hearths,
"Under the venom of one laidley nightshade,
"Wither the lilies of all France.

"De Mauprat [*impatiently*]. But Julie —"

Baradas [*unheeding him*]. As yet the Fiend that serves hath saved his power
From every snare; and in the epitaphs
Of many victims dwells a warning moral
That preaches caution. Were I not assured
That what before was hope is ripen'd now
Into most certain safety, trust me, Mauprat,
I still could hush my hate and mark my wrongs,
And say "Be patient!" — *Now*, the King himself
Smiles kindly when I tell him that his peers
Will rid him of his Priest. You knit your brows,
Noble impatience! — Pass we to our scheme!
'Tis Richelieu's wont, each morn, within his chapel,
(Hypocrite worship ended) to dispense
Alms to the Mendicant friars, — in that guise
A band (yourself the leader) shall surround
And seize the despot.

De Mauprat. But the King? but Julie?

Baradas. The King, infirm in health, in mind more feeble,
Is but the plaything of a Minister's will.
Were Richelieu dead — his power were mine; and Louis
Soon shall forget his passion and your crime.
But whither now?

De Mauprat. I know not; I scarce hear thee;
A little while for thought anon I'll join thee;
But now, all air seems tainted, and I loathe
The face of man!

[*Exit* De Mauprat, *through the Gardens*]

Baradas. Start from the chase, my prey,
But as thou speed'st the hell-hounds of Revenge
Pant in thy track and dog thee down.

[*Enter* De Beringhen, *his mouth full, a napkin in his hand*]

De Beringhen. Chevalier,
Your cook's a miracle — what, my Host gone?
Faith, Count, my office is a post of danger —
A fiery fellow, Mauprat! — touch and go, —
Match and saltpetre, — pr-r-r-r!

Baradas. You
Will be released ere long. The King resolves
To call the bride to Court this day.

De Beringhen. Poor Mauprat!
Yet, since *you* love the lady why so careless
Of the King's suit!

Baradas. Because the lady's virtuous,
And the King timid. Ere he win the suit

He'll lose the crown, — the bride will be a widow —
And I — the Richelieu of the Regent Orleans.

De Beringhen. Is Louis still so chafed against the Fox,
For snatching yon fair dainty from the Lion?

Baradas. So chafed that Richelieu totters. Yes, the King
Is half conspirator against the Cardinal.
Enough of this. I've found the man we wanted, —
The man to head the hands that murder Richelieu —
The man, whose name the synonym for daring.

De Beringhen. He must mean me! No, Count, I am — I own,
A valiant dog — but still —

Baradas. Whom can I mean
But Mauprat? — Mark, to-night we meet at Marion's,
There shall we sign: — thence send this scroll [*showing it*] to Bouillon.
You're in that secret [*affectionately*] one of our new Council.

De Beringhen. But to admit the Spaniard — France's foe —
Into the heart of France, — dethrone the King, —
It looks like treason, and I smell the headsman.

Baradas. Oh, Sir, too late to falter: when we meet
We must arrange the separate — coarser scheme,
For Richelieu's death. Of this despatch Mauprat
Must nothing learn. He only bites at vengeance,
And he would start from treason. — We must post him
Without the door at Marion's — as a sentry.
[*Aside*] — So, when his head is on the block — his tongue —
Cannot betray our more august designs!

De Beringhen. I'll meet you, if the King can spare me. — [*Aside*] — No!
I am too old a goose to play with foxes,
I'll roost at home. Meanwhile in the next room
There's a delicious pâté, let's discuss it.

Baradas. Pshaw! a man fill'd with a sublime ambition
Has no time to discuss your pâtés.

De Beringhen. Pshaw!
And a man fill'd with as sublime a pâté
Has no time to discuss ambition. — Gad, I have the best of it!

[*Enter* Julie *hastily with first* Courtier]

Julie. [*To* Courtier] A summons, Sir,
To attend the Louvre? — On *this* day, too?

Courtier. *Madame*,
The royal carriage waits below. — Messire [*to* De Beringhen],
You will return with us.

Julie. What can this mean? —
Where is my husband?

Baradas. He has left the house
Perhaps till nightfall — so he bade me tell you.
Alas, were I the Lord of such fair treasure —

Julie [*impatiently*]. Till nightfall? — Strange — my heart misgives me!

Courtier. *Madame*,
My orders will not brook delay.

Julie. [*To* Baradas] You'll see him —
And you will tell him!

Baradas. From the flowers of Hybla
Never more gladly did the bee bear honey,
Than I take sweetness from those rosiest lips,
Though to the hive of others!

Courtier. [*To* De Beringhen] Come, Messire.

De Beringhen [*hesitating*]. One moment, just to —

Courtier. Come, Sir.

De Beringhen. I shall not
Discuss the pâté after all. 'Ecod,
I'm puzzled now. I don't know who's the best of it!

[*Exeunt* Julie, De Beringhen, *and* Courtier]

Baradas. Now will this fire his fever into madness!
All is made clear! Mauprat *must* murder Richelieu —
Die for that crime; — I shall console his Julie —
This will reach Bouillon! — from the wrecks of France
I shall carve out — who knows — perchance a throne!
All in despite of my Lord Cardinal.

[*Enter* De Mauprat *from the Gardens*]

De Mauprat. Speak! can it be? —
Methought, that from the terrace
I saw the carriage of the King — and Julie!

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No, — no, — my frenzy peoples the void air
With its own phantoms!

BARADAS. Nay, too true. Alas!
Was ever lightning swifter or more blasting,
Than Richelieu's forkèd guile?

DE MAUPRAT. I'll to the Louvre —

BARADAS. And lose all hope! — The Louvre! — the sure gate
To the Bastile!

DE MAUPRAT. The King —

BARADAS. Is but the wax,
Which Richelieu stamps! Break the malignant seal
And I will rase the print! Come, man, take heart!
Her virtue well could brave a sterner trial
Than a few hours of cold imperious courtship.
Were Richelieu *dust* — no danger!

DE MAUPRAT. Ghastly Vengeance!
To thee and thine august and solemn sister
The unrelenting Death! I dedicate
The blood of Armand Richelieu. When Dishonour
Reaches our hearths Law dies, and Murther takes
The angel shape of Justice!

BARADAS. Bravely said!
At midnight, — Marion's! — Nay, I cannot leave thee
To thoughts that —

DE MAUPRAT. Speak not to me! — I am yours! —
But speak not! There's a voice within my soul,
Whose cry could drown the thunder! — Oh, if men
Will play dark sorcery with the heart of man,
Let them, who raise the spell, beware the Fiend! [*Exeunt*]

SCENE SECOND. — *A room in the Palais Cardinal (as in the First Act).*

[RICHELIEU *and* JOSEPH. FRANÇOIS, *writing at a table*]

JOSEPH. Yes, — Huguet, taking his accustom'd round, —
Disguised as some plain burgher, — heard these rufflers
Quoting your name: — he listen'd, — "Pshaw!" said one.
"We are to seize the Cardinal in his palace
To-morrow!" — "How?" the other ask'd — "You'll hear
The whole design to-night; the Duke of Orleans
And Baradas have got the map of action
At their fingers' end." — "So, be it," quoth the other,
"I will be there, — Marion de Lorme's — at midnight!"

RICHELIEU. I have them, man, I have them!

JOSEPH. So they say
Of you, my Lord; — believe me, that their plans
Are mightier than you deem. You must employ
Means no less vast to meet them.

RICHELIEU. Bah! in policy
We foil gigantic danger, not by giants,
But dwarfs. — The statues of our stately fortune
Are sculptured by the chisel — not the axe!
Ah, were I younger — by the knightly heart
That beats beneath these priestly robes, I would
Have pastime with these cutthroats! Yea — as when,
Lured to the ambush of the expecting foe, —
I clove my pathway through the plumèd sea!
Reach me yon falchion, François, — not that bauble
For carpet-warriors — yonder — such a blade
As old Charles Martel might have wielded, when
He drove the Saracen from France.

[FRANÇOIS *brings him one of the long two-handed swords worn in the middle ages*]

With this
I, at Rochelle, did hand to hand engage
The stalwart Englisher — no mongrels, boy,
Those island mastiffs — mark the notch — a deep one —
His casque made here, — I shore him to the waist!
A toy — a feather — then! [*Tries to wield, and lets it fall*] You see a child could
Slay Richelieu now.

FRANCOIS [*his hand on his hilt*]. But *now*, at your command
Are other weapons, my good Lord.

RICHELIEU [*who has seated himself as to write, lifts the pen*]. True, THIS!

Beneath the rule of men entirely great
The pen is mightier than the sword. Behold
The arch-enchanter's wand! — itself a nothing!
But taking sorcery from the master hand
To paralyse the Cæsars — and to strike
The loud earth breathless! — Take away the sword;
States can be saved without it!
[*Looking on the clock*] 'Tis the hour!
Retire, sir. [*Exit* FRANÇOIS]
[*A Knock — A door concealed in the arras, opens cautiously*]

[*Enter* MARION DE LORME]

JOSEPH [*amazed*]. Marion de Lorme!
RICHELIEU. Hist! — Joseph,
Keep guard.
[JOSEPH *retires to the principal entrance*]
My faithful Marion!
MARION. Good my Lord,
They meet to-night in my poor house. The Duke
Of Orleans heads them.
RICHELIEU. Yes; go on.
MARION. His Highness
Much question'd if I knew some brave, discreet,
And vigilant man, whose tongue could keep a secret,
And who had those twin qualities for service,
The love of gold, the hate of Richelieu.
RICHELIEU. You —
MARION. Made answer, "Yes, my brother; — bold and trusty:
Whose faith, my faith could pledge;" — the Duke then bade me
Have him equipp'd and arm'd — well mounted — ready
This night to part for Italy.
RICHELIEU. Aha! —
Has Bouillon too turn'd traitor? — So methought!
What part of Italy?
MARION. The Piedmont frontier,
Where Bouillon lies encamp'd.
RICHELIEU. Now there is danger!
Great danger! If he tamper with the Spaniard,
And Louis list not to my council, as,
Without sure proof he will not, France is lost.
What more?
MARION. Dark hints of some design to seize
Your person in your palace. Nothing clear —
His Highness trembled while he spoke — the words
Did choke each other.
RICHELIEU. So! — Who is the brother
You recommended to the Duke?
MARION. Whoever
Your Eminence may father!
RICHELIEU. Darling Marion!
[*Goes to the table, and returns with a large bag of gold*]
There — pshaw — a trifle! What an eye you have!
And what a smile, child! — [*Kisses her*] — Ah! you fair perdition —
'Tis well I'm old!
MARION [*aside and seriously*]. What a great man he is!
RICHELIEU. You are sure they meet? — the hour?
MARION. At midnight.
RICHELIEU. And
You will engage to give the Duke's despatch
To whom I send?
MARION. Aye, marry!
RICHELIEU [*aside*]. Huguet? No;
He will be wanted elsewhere. Joseph? — zealous,
But too well known — too much the *elder* brother!
Mauprat? — alas, it is his wedding-day!
François? — the Man of Men! — unnoted — young,
Ambitious — [*Goes to the door*] François!

[*Enter* FRANÇOIS]

Follow this fair lady:
(Find him the suiting garments, Marion;) take
My fleetest steed; arm thyself to the teeth;
A packet will be given you, with orders,
No matter what! The instant that your hand
Closes upon it, clutch *it*, like your honour,
Which Death alone can steal, or ravish: set
Spurs to your steed — be breathless, till you stand
Again before me. Stay, Sir! — You will find me
Two short leagues hence — at Ruelle, in my castle.
Young man, be blithe! for — note me — from the hour
I grasp that packet, think your guardian star
Rains fortune on you!
FRANÇOIS. If I fail —

RICHELIEU. Fail — fail?
In the lexicon of youth, which Fate reserves
For a bright manhood, there is no such word
As — *fail!* — (You will instruct him further, Marion)
Follow her — but at distance; — speak not to her,
Till you are housed — Farewell, boy! Never say
"*Fail*" again.

FRANÇOIS. I will not!

RICHELIEU [*patting his locks*]. There's my young hero! —

[*Exeunt* FRANÇOIS *and* MARION]

So they would seize my person in this palace?
I cannot guess their scheme: — but my retinue
Is here too large! A single traitor could
Strike impotent the faith of thousands; — Joseph,
Art sure of Huguet? — Think — we hang'd his father?

JOSEPH. But you have bought the son; — heap'd favours on him!

RICHELIEU. Trash! — favours past — that's nothing; in his hours
Of confidence with you, has he named the favours
To *come* he counts on?

JOSEPH. Yes: — a Colonel's rank,
And Letters of Nobility.

RICHELIEU. What, Huguet! —

[*Here* HUGUET *enters, as to address the* CARDINAL, *who does not perceive him*]

HUGUET. My own name, soft —

[*Glides behind the screen*]

RICHELIEU. Colonel and Nobleman!
My bashful Huguet — that can never be! —
We have him not the less — we'll *promise* it!
And see the King withholds! — Ah, Kings are oft
A great convenience to a minister!
No wrong to Huguet either! — Moralists
Say, Hope is sweeter than Possession! Yes —
We'll count on Huguet! Favours *past* do gorge
Our dogs; leave service drowsy — *dull* the scent,
Slacken the speed; — favours *to come*, my Joseph,
Produce a lusty, hungry gratitude,
A ravenous zeal, that of the commonest cur
Would make a Cerberus. — You are right, this treason
Assumes a fearful aspect; — but once crush'd,
Its very ashes shall manure the soil
Of power: and ripen such full sheaves of greatness,
That all the summer of my fate shall seem
Fruitless beside the autumn!

[HUGUET *holds up his hand menacingly, and creeps out*]

JOSEPH. The saints grant it!

RICHELIEU [*solemnly*]. Yes — for sweet France, Heaven grant it! — O my country,
For thee — thee only — though men deem it not —
Are toil and terror my familiars! — I
Have made thee great and fair — upon thy brows
Wreath'd the old Roman laurel; — at thy feet
Bow'd nations down. — No pulse in my ambition
Whose beatings were not measured from thy heart!
"In the old times before us, patriots lived
"And died for liberty —

"JOSEPH. As you would live
"And die for despotry —

"RICHELIEU. False monk, not so,
"But for the purple and the power wherein
"State clothes herself. — I love my native land
"Not as Venetian, Englisher, or Swiss,
"But as a Noble and a Priest of France;
"'All things for France' — lo, my eternal maxim!
"The vital axle of the restless wheels
"That bear me on! With her, I have entwined
"My passions and my fate — my crimes, my virtues —
"Hated and loved, and schemed, and shed men's blood,
"As the calm crafts of Tuscan ages teach
"Those who would make their country great. Beyond
"The map of France, my heart can travel not,
"But fills that limit to its farthest verge;
"And while I live — Richelieu and France are one."
We Priests, to whom the Church forbids in youth
The plighted one — to manhood's toil denies

The soother helpmate — from our wither'd age
Shuts the sweet blossoms of the second spring
That smiles in the name of Father — We are yet
Not holier than Humanity and must
Fulfil Humanity's condition — Love!
Debarr'd the Actual, we but breathe a life
To the chill Marble of the Ideal — Thus,
In thy unseen and abstract Majesty,
My France — my Country, I have bodied forth
A thing to love. What are these robes of state,
This pomp, this palace? perishable baubles!
In this world two things only are immortal:
Fame and a People!

[*Enter* HUGUET]

HUGUET. My Lord Cardinal,
Your Eminence bade me seek you at this hour.

RICHELIEU. Did I? — True, Huguet. — So — you overheard
Strange talk amongst these gallants? Snares and traps
For Richelieu? — Well — we'll balk them; let me think, —
The men-at-arms you head — how many?

HUGUET. Twenty,
My Lord.

RICHELIEU. All trusty?

HUGUET. Yes, for ordinary
Occasions — if for great ones, I would change
Three-fourths at least!

RICHELIEU. Ay, what are great occasions?

HUGUET. Great bribes!

RICHELIEU. [*To* JOSEPH] Good lack, he knows some paragons
Superior to great bribes!

HUGUET. True Gentlemen
Who have transgress'd the Laws — and value life
And lack not gold; your Eminence alone
Can grant them pardon. *Ergo* you can trust them!

RICHELIEU. Logic! — So be it — let this *honest* twenty
Be arm'd and mounted. — [*Aside*] So they meet at midnight,
The attempt on me to-morrow. Ho! we'll strike
'Twixt wind and water. — [*Aloud*] Does it need much time
To find these ornaments to Human Nature?

HUGUET. My Lord — the trustiest of them are not birds
That love the daylight. — I do know a haunt
Where they meet nightly.

RICHELIEU. Ere the dawn be grey,
All could be arm'd, assembled, and at Ruelle
In my own hall?

HUGUET. By one hour after midnight.

RICHELIEU. The castle's strong. You know its outlets, Huguet?
Would twenty men, well posted, keep such guard
That no one step (and Murther's step is stealthy)
Could glide within — unseen?

HUGUET. A triple wall,
A drawbridge and portcullis — twenty men —
Under my lead, a month might hold that castle
Against a host.

RICHELIEU. They do not strike till morning,
Yet I will shift the quarter — Bid the grooms
Prepare the litter — I will to Ruelle
While daylight last — and one hour after midnight
You and your twenty saints shall seek me thither!
You're made to rise! — You are, Sir — Eyes of lynx,
Ears of the stag, a footfall like the snow;
You are a valiant fellow; — yea, a trusty,
Religious, exemplary, incorrupt,
And precious jewel of a fellow, Huguet!
If I live long enough — ay, mark my words —
If I live long enough, you'll be a Colonel, —
Noble, perhaps! — One hour, Sir, after midnight.

HUGUET. You leave me dumb with gratitude, my lord;
I'll pick the trustiest [*aside*] Marion's house can furnish! [*Exit* HUGUET]

RICHELIEU. How like a spider shall I sit in my hole,
And watch the meshes tremble.

JOSEPH. But, my Lord,
Were it not wiser still to man the palace,
And seize the traitors in the act?

RICHELIEU. No; Louis.

Long chafed against me — Julie stolen from him,
Will rouse him more. — He'll say I hatch'd the treason,
Or scout my charge — He half desires my death:
But the despatch to Bouillon, some dark scheme
Against *his* crown — there is our weapon, Joseph!
With that all safe — without it, all is peril!
Meanwhile to my old castle; *you* to Court,
Diving with careless eyes into men's hearts —
As ghostly churchmen should do! See the King,
Bid him pursue that sage and holy treatise,
Wherein 'tis set forth how a Premier should
Be chosen from the Priesthood — how the King
Should never listen to a single charge
Against his servant, nor conceal one whisper
That the rank envies of a Court distill
Into his ear — to fester the fair name
Of my — I mean his Minister! — Oh! Joseph,
A most convincing treatise.
Good! all favours,
If François be but bold, and Huguet honest. —
Huguet — I half suspect — he bow'd too low —
'Tis not his way.

JOSEPH. This is the curse, my Lord,
Of your high state; — suspicion of all men.

RICHELIEU [*sadly*]. True; — true; — my leeches bribed to poisoners; — pages
To strangle me in sleep. — My very King
(This brain the unresting loom, from which was woven
The purple of his greatness) leagued against me.
Old — childless — friendless — broken — all forsake —
All — all — but —

JOSEPH. What?

RICHELIEU. The indomitable heart
Of Armand Richelieu!

JOSEPH. Nought beside?

RICHELIEU. Why, Julie,
My own foster-child, forgive me! — yes;
This morning, shining through their happy tears,
Thy soft eyes bless'd me! and thy Lord, — in danger
He would forsake me not.

JOSEPH. And Joseph —

RICHELIEU [*after a pause*]. You —
Yes, I believe you — yes — for all men fear you —
And the world loves you not. — And I, friend Joseph,
I am the only man who could, my Joseph,
Make you a Bishop — Come, we'll go to dinner,
And talk the while of methods to advance
Our Mother Church — Ah, Joseph — *Bishop Joseph!* [*Exeunt*]

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SECOND DAY (Midnight)

SCENE FIRST. — RICHELIEU'S *Castle at Ruelle.* — *A Gothic chamber.* — *Moonlight at the window, occasionally obscured.*

RICHELIEU [*reading*]. "In silence, and at night, the Conscience feels
That life should soar to nobler ends than Power."
So sayest thou, sage and sober moralist!
But wert thou tried? Sublime Philosophy,
Thou art the Patriarch's ladder, reaching heaven,
And bright with beck'ning angels — but, alas!
We see thee, like the Patriarch, but in dreams,
By the first step — dull-slumbering on the earth.
I am not happy! — with the Titan's lust,
I woo'd a goddess, and I clasp a cloud.
When I am dust, my name shall, like a star,
Shine through wan space, a glory — and a prophet
Whereby pale seers shall from their aery towers
Con all the ominous signs, benign or evil,
That make the potent astrologue of kings.
But shall the Future judge me by the ends
That I have wrought — or by the dubious means

Through which the stream of my renown hath run
Into the many-voiced unfathomed Time?
Foul in its bed lie weeds — and heaps of slime,
And with its waves — when sparkling in the sun,
Oft times the secret rivulets that swell
Its might of waters — blend the hues of blood.
Yet are my sins not those of CIRCUMSTANCE,
That all-pervading atmosphere wherein
Our spirits like the unsteady lizard, take
The tints that colour, and the food that nurtures?
Oh! ye, whose hour-glass shifts its tranquil sands
In the unvex'd silence of a student's cell;
Ye, whose untempted hearts have never toss'd
Upon the dark and stormy tides where life
Gives battle to the elements, — and man
Wrestles with man for some slight plank, whose weight
Will bear but one — while round the desperate wretch
The hungry billows roar — and the fierce Fate,
Like some huge monster, dim-seen through the surf,
Waits him who drops; — ye safe and formal men,
Who write the deeds, and with unfeverish hand
Weigh in nice scales the motives of the Great,
Ye cannot know what ye have never tried!
History preserves only the fleshless bones
Of what we are — and by the mocking skull
The would-be wise pretend to guess the features!
Without the roundness and the glow of life
How hideous is the skeleton! Without
The colourings and humanities that clothe
Our errors, the anatomists of schools
Can make our memory hideous!
I have wrought
Great uses out of evil tools — and they
In the time to come may bask beneath the light
Which I have stolen from the angry gods,
And warn their sons against the glorious theft,
Forgetful of the darkness which it broke.
I have shed blood — but I have had no foes
Save those the State had — if my wrath was deadly,
'Tis that I felt my country in my veins,
And smote her sons as Brutus smote his own.
And yet I am not happy — blanch'd and sear'd
Before my time — breathing an air of hate,
And seeing daggers in the eyes of men,
And wasting powers that shake the thrones of earth
In contest with the insects — bearding kings
And braved by lackies — murder at my bed;
And lone amidst the multitudinous web,
With the dread Three — that are the fates who hold
The woof and shears — the Monk, the Spy, the Headsman.
And this is Power! Alas! I am not happy. [*After a pause*]
And yet the Nile is fretted by the weeds
Its rising roots not up: but never yet
Did one least barrier by a ripple vex
My onward tide, unswept in sport away.
Am I so ruthless then that I do hate
Them who hate me? Tush, tush! I do not hate;
Nay, I forgive. The Statesman writes the doom,
But the Priest sends the blessing. I forgive them,
But I destroy; forgiveness is my own,
Destruction is the State's! For private life,
Scripture the guide — for public, Machiavel.
Would Fortune serve me if the Heaven were wroth?
For chance makes half my greatness. I was born
Beneath the aspect of a bright-eyed star,
And my triumphant adamant of soul
Is but the fix'd persuasion of success.
Ah! — here! — that spasm! — Again! How Life and Death
Do wrestle for me momently! And yet

The King looks pale. I shall outlive the King!
And then, thou insolent Austrian — who didst gibe
At the ungainly, gaunt, and daring lover,
Sleeking thy looks to silken Buckingham, —
Thou shalt — no matter! I have outlived love.
O! beautiful — all golden — gentle Youth!
Making thy palace in the careless front
And hopeful eye of man — ere yet the soul
Hath lost the memories which (so Plato dream'd)
Breath'd glory from the earlier star it dwelt in —
O! for one gale from thine exulting morning,
Stirring amidst the roses, where of old
Love shook the dew-drops from his glancing hair!
Could I recall the past — or had not set
The prodigal treasures of the bankrupt soul
In one slight bark upon the shoreless sea;
The yoked steer, after his day of toil,
Forgets the goad and rests — to me alike
Or day or night — Ambition has no rest!
Shall I resign — who can resign himself?
For custom is ourself; — as drink and food
Become our bone and flesh — the aliments
Nurturing our nobler part, the mind — thoughts, dreams,
Passions, and aims, in the revolving cycle
Of the great alchemy — at length are made
Our mind itself; and yet the sweets of leisure —
An honour'd home — far from these base intrigues —
An eyrie on the heaven-kiss'd heights of wisdom.
[*Taking up the book*]
Speak to me, moralist! I will heed thy counsel.
Were it not best —

[*Enter* FRANÇOIS, *hastily and in part disguised*]

[*flinging away the book*]
Philosophy, thou liest!
Quick — the despatch! — Power — Empire! Boy — the packet!

FRANÇOIS. Kill me, my Lord.

RICHELIEU. They knew thee — they suspected —
They gave it not —

FRANÇOIS. He gave it — *he* — the Count
De Baradas — with his own hand he gave it!

RICHELIEU. Baradas! Joy! out with it!

FRANÇOIS. Listen,
And then dismiss me to the headsman.

RICHELIEU. Ha!
Go on.

FRANÇOIS. They led me to a chamber — There
Orleans and Baradas — and some half-score
Whom I knew not — were met —

RICHELIEU. Not more!

FRANÇOIS. But from
The adjoining chamber broke the din of voices,
The clattering tread of armed men; — at times
A shriller cry, that yell'd out, "Death to Richelieu!"

RICHELIEU. Speak not of *me:* thy *country* is in danger!
The adjoining room. — So, so — a *separate* treason!
The one thy ruin, France! — the meaner crime,
Left to their tools, my murder!

FRANÇOIS. Baradas
Questioned me close — demurr'd — until, at last,
O'erruled by Orleans, — gave the packet — told me
That life and death were in the scroll — this gold —

RICHELIEU. Gold is no proof —

FRANÇOIS. And Orleans promised thousands,
When Bouillon's trumpets in the streets of Paris
Rang out shrill answer; hastening from the house,
My footstep in the stirrup, Marion stole
Across the threshhold, whispering "Lose no moment
Ere Richelieu have the packet: tell him too —
Murder is in the winds of Night, and Orleans
Swears, ere the dawn the Cardinal shall be clay."
She said, and trembling fled within; when, lo!
A hand of iron griped me; thro' the dark

Gleam'd the dim shadow of an armed man:
Ere I could draw — the prize was wrested from me,
And a hoarse voice gasp'd — "Spy, I spare thee, for
This steel is virgin to thy Lord!" — with that
He vanish'd. — Scared and trembling for thy safety,
I mounted, fled, and, kneeling at thy feet,
Implore thee to acquit my faith — but not,
Like him, to spare my life.

RICHELIEU. Who spake of *life?*
I bade thee grasp that treasure as thine *honour* —
A jewel worth whole hecatombs of lives!
Begone — redeem thine honour — back to Marion —
Or Baradas or Orleans — track the robber —
Regain the packet — or crawl on to Age —
Age and grey hairs like mine — and know, thou hast lost
That which had made thee great and saved thy country.
See me not till thou'st bought the right to seek me.
Away! — Nay, cheer thee — thou hast not fail'd yet —
There's no such word as "fail!"

FRANÇOIS. Bless you, my Lord,
For that one smile! I'll wear it on my heart
To light me back to triumph. [*Exit*]

RICHELIEU. The poor youth!
An elder had ask'd life! I love the young!
For as great men live not in their own time
But the next race, — so in the young, my soul
Makes many Richelieus. He will win it yet.
François! He's gone. My murder! Marion's warning!
This bravo's threat! O for the morrow's dawn! —
I'll set my spies to work — I'll make all space
(As does the sun) an Universal Eye —
Huguet shall track — Joseph confess — ha! ha!
Strange, while I laugh'd I shudder'd, and ev'n now
Thro' the chill air the beating of my heart
Sounds like a death-watch by a sick man's pillow;
If Huguet *could* deceive me — hoofs without —
The gates unclose — steps near and nearer!

[*Enter* JULIE]

JULIE. Cardinal!
My father! [*Falls at his feet*]

RICHELIEU. Julie at this hour! — and tears!
What ails thee?

JULIE. I am safe; I am with thee! —

RICHELIEU. Safe! why in all the storms of this wild world
What wind would mar the violet?

JULIE. That man —
Why did I love him? — clinging to a breast
That knows no shelter?
Listen — late at noon —
The marriage-day — ev'n then no more a lover —
He left me coldly, — well, — I sought my chamber
To weep and wonder — but to hope and dream.
Sudden a mandate from the King — to attend
Forthwith his pleasure at the Louvre.

RICHELIEU. Ha! —
You did obey the summons; and the King
Reproach'd your hasty nuptials. —

JULIE. Were that all!
He frown'd and chid; — proclaim'd the bond unlawful:
Bade me not quit my chamber in the palace,
And there at night — alone — this night — all still —
He sought my presence — dared — thou read'st the heart,
Read mine! — I cannot speak it!

RICHELIEU. He a king, —
You — woman; well, you yielded!

JULIE. Cardinal —
Dare you say "yielded"? — Humbled and abash'd,
He from the chamber crept — this mighty Louis;
Crept like a baffled felon! — yielded! Ah!
More royalty in woman's honest heart
Than dwells within the crownèd majesty
And sceptred anger of a hundred kings!
Yielded! — Heavens! — yielded!

RICHELIEU. To my breast, — close — close!
The world would never need a Richelieu, if
Men — bearded, mailed men — the Lords of Earth —

Resisted flattery, falsehood, avarice, pride,
As this poor child with the dove's innocent scorn
Her sex's tempters, Vanity and Power! —
He left you — well!

JULIE. Then came a sharper trial!
At the King's suit the Count de Baradas
Sought me to soothe, to fawn, to flatter, while
On his smooth lip insult appear'd more hateful
For the false mask of pity: letting fall
Dark hints of treachery, with a world of sighs
That heaven had granted to so base a Lord
The heart whose coldest friendship were to him
What Mexico to misers! Stung at last
By my disdain, the dim and glimmering sense
Of his cloak'd words broke into bolder light,
And THEN — ah, then, my haughty spirit fail'd me!
Then I was weak — wept — oh! such bitter tears!
For (turn thy face aside, and let me whisper
The horror to thine ear) then did I learn
That he — that Adrien — that my husband — knew
The King's polluting suit, and deemed it *honour!*
Then all the terrible and loathsome truth
Glared on me; — coldness — waywardness — reserve —
Mystery of looks — words — all unravell'd, — and
I saw the impostor, where I had loved the God! —

RICHELIEU. I think thou wrong'st thy husband — but proceed.

JULIE. Did you say "wrong'd" him? — Cardinal, my father,
Did you say "wrong'd"? Prove it, and life shall grow
One prayer for thy reward and his forgiveness.

RICHELIEU. Let me know all.

JULIE. To the despair he caused
The courtier left me; but amid the chaos
Darted one guiding ray — to 'scape — to fly —
Reach Adrien, learn the worst — 'twas then near midnight:
Trembling I left my chamber — sought the Queen —
Fell at her feet — reveal'd the unholy peril —
Implored her to aid to flee our joint disgrace.
Moved, she embraced and soothed me; nay, preserved;
Her word sufficed to unlock the palace-gates:
I hasten'd home — but home was desolate, —
No Adrien there! Fearing the worst, I fled
To thee, directed hither. As my wheels
Paused at thy gates — the clang of arms behind —
The ring of hoofs —

RICHELIEU. 'Twas but my guards, fair trembler.
(So Huguet keeps his word, my omens wrong'd him.)

JULIE. Oh, in one hour what years of anguish crowd!

RICHELIEU. Nay, there's no danger now. Thou need'st rest.
Come thou shalt lodge beside me. Tush! be cheer'd,
My rosiest Amazon — thou wrong'st thy Theseus.
All will be well — yes, yet all well.

[*Exeunt through a side door*]

SCENE SECOND. — *The moonlight obscured at the casement.*

[*Enter* HUGUET. DE MAUPRAT, *in complete armour, his vizor down*]

HUGUET. Not here!

DE MAUPRAT. Oh, I will find him, fear not. Hence, and guard
The galleries where the menials sleep — plant sentries
At every outlet. Chance should throw no shadow
Between the vengeance and the victim! Go!
Ere yon brief vapour that obscures the moon,
As doth our deed pale conscience, pass away,
The mighty shall be ashes.

HUGUET. Will you not
A second arm?

DE MAUPRAT. To slay one weak old man?
Away! No lesser wrongs than mine can make
This murder lawful. — Hence!

HUGUET. A short farewell! [*Exit*]

[*Re-enter* RICHELIEU, *not perceiving* DE MAUPRAT]

RICHELIEU. How heavy is the air! the vestal lamp
Of the sad moon, weary with vigil, dies
In the still temple of the solemn heaven!
The very darkness lends itself to fear —
To treason —

DE MAUPRAT. And to death!

RICHELIEU. My omens lied not!
What art thou, wretch?

DE MAUPRAT. Thy doomsman!

RICHELIEU. Ho, my guards!
Huguet! Montbrassil! Vermont!

DE MAUPRAT. Ay, thy spirits
Forsake thee, wizard; thy bold men of mail
Are *my confederates*. Stir not! but one step,
And know the next — thy grave!

RICHELIEU. Thou liest, knave!
I am old, infirm — most feeble — but thou liest!
Armand de Richelieu dies not by the hand
Of man — the stars have said it — and the voice
Of my own prophet and oracular soul
Confirms the shining Sibyls! Call them all —
Thy brother butchers! Earth has no such fiend —
No! as one parricide of his father-land,
Who dares in Richelieu murder France!

DE MAUPRAT. Thy stars
Deceive thee, Cardinal; thy soul of wiles
May against kings and armaments avail,
And mock the embattled world; but powerless now
Against the sword of one resolved man,
Upon whose forehead thou hast written shame!

RICHELIEU. I breathe; — he is not a hireling. Have I wronged thee?
Beware surmise — suspicion — lies! I am
Too great for men to speak the truth of me!

DE MAUPRAT. Thy *acts* are thy accusers, Cardinal.
In his hot youth, a soldier, urged to crime
Against the State, placed in your hands his life; —
You did not strike the blow, — but, o'er his head,
Upon the gossamer thread of your caprice,
Hovered the axe. — His the brave spirit's hell,
The twilight terror of suspense; — your death
Had set him free. — He purposed not, nor prayed it.
One day you summoned — mocked him with smooth pardon —
Showered wealth upon him — bade an Angel's face
Turn earth to paradise —

RICHELIEU. Well!

DE MAUPRAT. Was this mercy?
A Cæsar's generous vengeance? — Cardinal, no!
Judas, not Cæsar, was the model! You
Saved him from death for shame; reserved to grow
The scorn of living men — to his dead sires
Leprous reproach — scoff of the age to come —
A kind convenience — a Sir Pandarus
To his own bride, and the august adulterer!
Then did the first great law of human hearts,
Which with the patriot's, not the rebel's name
Crowned the first Brutus, when the Tarquin fell,
Make Misery royal — raise this desperate wretch
Into thy destiny! Expect no mercy!
Behold De Mauprat! [*Lifts his visor*]

RICHELIEU. To thy knees, and crawl
For pardon; or, I tell thee, thou shalt live
For such remorse, that, did I hate thee, I
Would bid thee strike, that I might be avenged!
It was to save my Julie from the King,
That in thy valour I forgave thy crime; —
It was, when thou — the rash and ready tool —
Yea of that shame thou loath'st — did'st leave thy hearth
To the polluter — in these arms thy bride
Found the protecting shelter thine withheld. [*Goes to the side door*]
Julie de Mauprat — Julie!

[*Enter* JULIE]

Lo, my witness!

DE MAUPRAT. What marvel's this? I dream. My Julie — *thou!*
This, thy belovèd hand?

JULIE. Henceforth all bond
Between us twain is broken. Were it not

For this old man, I might, in truth, have lost
The right — now mine — to scorn thee!

RICHELIEU. So, you hear her!

DE MAUPRAT. Thou with some slander hast her sense infected!

JULIE. No, Sir; he did excuse thee in despite
Of all that wears the face of truth. Thy *friend* —
Thy *confidant* — familiar — *Baradas* —
Himself revealed thy baseness.

DE MAUPRAT. Baseness!

RICHELIEU. Ay;
That *thou* didst *court* dishonour.

DE MAUPRAT. Baradas!
Where is thy thunder, Heaven? — Duped! — snared! — undone!
Thou — thou could'st not believe him! Thou dost love me!
Love cannot feed on falsehood!

JULIE [*aside*]. Love him! Ah!
Be still, my heart! Love you I did: — how fondly,
Woman — if women were my listeners now —
Alone could tell! — For ever fled my dream.
Farewell — all's over!

RICHELIEU. Nay, my daughter, these
Are but the blinding mists of day-break love
Sprung from its very light, and heralding
A noon of happy summer. — Take her hand
And speak the truth, with which your heart runs over —
That this Count Judas — this Incarnate Falsehood —
Never lied more, than when he told thy Julie
That Adrien loved her not — except, indeed,
When he told Adrien, Julie could betray him.

JULIE [*embracing* DE MAUPRAT]. You love me, then! you love me! — and they wrong'd you!

DE MAUPRAT. Ah, could'st thou doubt it?

RICHELIEU. Why, the very mole
Less blind than thou! Baradas loves thy wife; —
Had hoped her hand — aspired to be that cloak
To the King's will, which to thy bluntness seems
The Centaur's poisonous robe — hopes even now
To make thy corpse his footstool to thy bed!
Where was thy wit, man? Ho, these schemes are glass!
The very sun shines through them.

DE MAUPRAT. O, my Lord,
Can you forgive me?

RICHELIEU. Ay, and save you!

DE MAUPRAT Save! —
Terrible word! — O, save *thyself;* these halls
Swarm with thy foes; already for thy blood
Pants thirsty murder!

JULIE. Murder!

RICHELIEU. Hush! put by
The woman. Hush! a shriek — a cry — — a breath
Too loud, would startle from its horrent pause
The swooping Death! Go to the door, and listen!
Now for escape!

DE MAUPRAT. None, — none! Their blades shall pass
This heart to thine.

RICHELIEU [*drily*]. An honourable outwork,
But much too near the citadel. I think
That I can trust you now [*slowly, and gazing on him*] — yes;
I can trust you.
How many of my troop league with you?

DE MAUPRAT. All! —
We *are* your troop!

RICHELIEU. And Huguet? —

DE MAUPRAT. Is our captain.

RICHELIEU. A retributive Power! This comes of spies
All? then the lion's skin too short to-night, —
Now for the fox's! —

JULIE. A hoarse gathering murmur! —
Hurrying and heavy footsteps! —

RICHELIEU. Ha, the posterns?

DE MAUPRAT. No egress where no sentry!

RICHELIEU. Follow me —
I have it! to my chamber — quick! Come, Julie!
Hush! Mauprat, come!

[*Murmur at a distance "Death to the Cardinal!"*]

Bloodhounds, I laugh at ye! ha! ha! we will
Baffle them yet! Ha! ha!

[*Exeunt* JULIE, MAUPRAT, RICHELIEU]

HUGUET [*without*]. This way — this way!

SCENE THIRD. — *Enter* HUGUET, *and the* CONSPIRATORS.

HUGUET. De Mauprat's hand is never slow in battle; —
Strange, if it falter now! Ha! gone!
FIRST CONSPIRATOR. Perchance
The fox had crept to rest! and to his lair
Death, the dark hunter, tracks him.

[*Enter* MAUPRAT, *throwing open the doors of the recess, in which a bed, whereon* RICHELIEU *lies extended*]

DE MAUPRAT. Live the King!
Richelieu is dead!
HUGUET [*advancing towards the recess;* MAUPRAT *following, his hand on his dagger*]. Are his eyes open?
DE MAUPRAT. Ay.
As if in life!
HUGUET [*turning back*]. I will not look on him.
You have been long.
DE MAUPRAT. I watched him till he slept.
Heed me. No trace of blood reveals the deed; —
Strangled in sleep. His health hath long been broken —
Found breathless in his bed. So runs our tale,
Remember! Back to Paris — Orleans gives
Ten thousand crowns, and Baradas a lordship,
To him who first gluts vengeance with the news
That Richelieu is in Heaven! Quick, that all France
May share your joy.
HUGUET. And you?
DE MAUPRAT. Will stay to crush
Eager suspicion — to forbid sharp eyes
To dwell too closely on the clay; prepare
The rites, and place him on his bier — this *my* task.
I leave to you, Sirs, the more grateful lot
Of wealth and honours. Hence!
HUGUET. I shall be noble!
DE MAUPRAT. Away!
FIRST CONSPIRATOR. Five thousand crowns!
OMNES. To horse! to horse!
[*Exeunt* CONSPIRATORS]

SCENE FOURTH. — *Still night. — A room in the house of* COUNT DE BARADAS, *lighted, &c.*

[ORLEANS *and* DE BERINGHEN]

DE BERINGHEN. I understand. Mauprat kept guard without:
Knows nought of the despatch — but heads the troop
Whom the poor Cardinal fancies his protectors.
Save us from such protection!
ORLEANS. Yet if Huguet,
By whose advice and proffers we renounced
Our earlier scheme, should still be Richelieu's minion,
And play us false —
DE BERINGHEN. The fox must then devour
The geese he gripes, I'm out of it, thank Heaven!
And you must swear you smelt the trick, but seem'd
To approve the deed to render up the doers.

[*Enter* BARADAS]

BARADAS. Julie is fled — the King, whom now I left
To a most thorny pillow, vows revenge
On her — on Mauprat — and on Richelieu! Well;
We loyal men anticipate his wish
Upon the last — and as for Mauprat —
[*Showing a writ*]
DE BERINGHEN. Hum!
They say the devil invented printing! Faith,
He has some hand in writing parchment — eh, Count?
What mischief now?
BARADAS. The King at Julie's flight
Enraged will brook no rival in a subject —
So on this old offence — the affair of Faviaux —
Ere Mauprat can tell tales of *us*, we build
His bridge between the dungeon and the grave.
ORLEANS. Well; if our courier can but reach the army,
The cards are ours! and yet I own, I tremble.
Our names are in the scroll — discovery, death!
BARADAS. Success, a crown!
DE BERINGHEN [*apart to* BARADAS]. Our future regent is
No hero.

BARADAS. [*To* BERINGHEN] But his rank makes others valiant;
And on his cowardice I mount to power.
Were Orleans Regent — what were Baradas?
Oh! by the way — I had forgot, your Highness,
Friend Huguet whisper'd me, "Beware of Marion:
I've seen her lurking near the Cardinal's palace."
Upon that hint — I've found her lodgings elsewhere.

ORLEANS. You wrong her, Count: — Poor Marion! she adores me.

BARADAS [*apologetically*]. Forgive me, but —

[*Enter* PAGE]

PAGE. My Lord, a rude, strange soldier,
Breathless with haste, demands an audience.

BARADAS. So!
The Archers!

PAGE. In the ante-room, my Lord,
As you desired.

BARADAS. 'Tis well, admit the soldier. [*Exit* PAGE]
Huguet! I bade him seek me here!

[*Enter* HUGUET]

HUGUET. My Lords,
The deed is done. Now Count, fulfil your word,
And make me noble!

BARADAS. Richelieu dead? — art sure?
How died he?

HUGUET. Strangled in his sleep: — no blood,
No tell-tale violence.

BARADAS. Strangled? monstrous villain!
Reward for murder! Ho, there! [*Stamping*]

[*Enter* CAPTAIN *with five* ARCHERS]

HUGUET. No, thou durst not!

BARADAS. Seize on the ruffian — bind him — gag him! Off
To the Bastile!

HUGUET. Your word — your plighted faith!

BARADAS. Insolent liar! — ho, away!

HUGUET. Nay, Count;
I have that about me, which —

BARADAS. Away with him!
[*Exeunt* HUGUET *and* ARCHERS]
Now, then, all's safe; Huguet must die in prison,
So Mauprat: — coax or force the meaner crew
To fly the country. Ha, ha! thus, your Highness,
Great men make use of little men.

DE BERINGHEN. My Lords,
Since our suspense is ended — you'll excuse me;
'Tis late, and, *entre nous*, I have not supp'd yet!
I'm one of the new Council now, remember;
I feel the public stirring here already;
A very craving monster. *Au revoir!*
[*Exit* DE BERINGHEN]

ORLEANS. No fear, now Richelieu's dead.

BARADAS. And could he come
To life again, he could not keep life's life —
His power — nor save De Mauprat from the scaffold, —
Nor Julie from these arms — nor Paris from
The Spaniard — nor your Highness from the throne!
All ours! all ours! in spite of my Lord Cardinal!

[*Enter* PAGE]

PAGE. A gentleman, my Lord, of better mien
Than he who last —

BARADAS. Well, he may enter.
[*Exit* PAGE]

ORLEANS. Who
Can this be?

BARADAS. One of the conspirators:
Mauprat himself, perhaps.

[*Enter* FRANÇOIS]

FRANÇOIS. My Lord —

BARADAS. Ha, traitor!
In Paris still?

FRANÇOIS. The packet — the despatch —
Some knave play'd spy without, and reft it from me,
Ere I could draw my sword.

BARADAS. Play'd spy *without!*
Did he wear armour?

FRANÇOIS. Ay, from head to heel.

ORLEANS. One of our band. Oh, heavens!

BARADAS. Could it be Mauprat?
Kept guard at the *door* — knew *naught of the despatch* —
How HE? — and yet, who other?

FRANÇOIS. Ha, De Mauprat!

The night was dark — his visor closed.
BARADAS. 'Twas he!
How could he guess? — 'sdeath! if he should betray us.
His hate to Richelieu dies with Richelieu — and
He was not great enough for treason. Hence!
Find Mauprat — beg, steal, filch, or force it back,
Or, as I live, the halter —
FRANÇOIS. By the morrow
I will regain it, [*aside*] and redeem my honour! [*Exit* FRANÇOIS]
ORLEANS. Oh! we are lost —
BARADAS. Not so! But cause on cause
For Mauprat's seizure — silence — death! Take courage.
ORLEANS. Should it once reach the King, the Cardinal's arm
Could smite us from the grave.
BARADAS. Sir, think it not!
I hold De Mauprat in my grasp. To-morrow
And France is ours! Thou dark and fallen Angel,
Whose name on earth's AMBITION — thou that mak'st
Thy throne on treasons, stratagems, and murder —
And with thy fierce and blood-red smile canst quench
The guiding stars of solemn empire — hear us —
(For we are thine) — and light us to the goal! [*Exeunt*]

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

THIRD DAY

SCENE FIRST. — *The Gardens of the Louvre.*

[ORLEANS, BARADAS, DE BERINGHEN, COURTIERS, *&c.*]

ORLEANS. How does my brother bear the Cardinal's death?
BARADAS. With grief, when thinking of the toils of State;
With joy, when thinking on the eyes of Julie: —
At times he sighs, "Who now shall govern France?"
Anon exclaims — "Who now shall baffle Louis?"

[*Enter* LOUIS *and other* COURTIERS. *They uncover*]

ORLEANS. Now my Liege, now, I can embrace a brother.
LOUIS. Dear Gaston, yes. I do believe you *love* me; —
Richelieu denied it — sever'd us too long.
A great man, Gaston! Who shall govern France?
BARADAS. Yourself, my Liege. That swart and potent star
Eclipsed your royal orb. He serv'd the country,
But did he *serve*, or seek to *sway* the *King?*
LOUIS. You're right — he was an able politician,
That's all. — Between ourselves, Count, I suspect
The largeness of his learning — specially
In falcons — a poor huntsman, too!
BARADAS. Ha — ha!
Your Majesty remembers —
LOUIS. Ay, the blunder
Between the *greffier* and the *souillard* when —
[*Checks and crosses himself*]
Alas! poor sinners that we are! we laugh
While this great man — a priest, a cardinal,
A faithful servant — out upon us!
BARADAS. Sire,
If my brow wear no cloud, 'tis that the Cardinal
No longer shades the King.
LOUIS [*looking up at the skies*]. Oh, Baradas!
Am I not to be pitied? — what a day
For —
BARADAS. Sorrow? — No, Sire!
LOUIS. Bah! for *hunting*, man,
And Richelieu's dead; 'twould be an indecorum
Till he is buried [*Yawns*] — life is very tedious.
I made a madrigal on life last week:
You do not sing, Count? Pity; you should learn.
Poor Richelieu had no ear — yet a great man.
Ah! what a weary weight devolves upon me!
These endless wars — these thankless Parliaments —
The snares in which he tangled States and Kings,
Like the old fisher of the fable, Proteus,
Netting great Neptune's wariest tribes, and changing

Into all shapes when Craft pursued himself:
Oh, a great man!

BARADAS. Your royal mother said so,
And died in exile.

LOUIS [*sadly*]. True: I loved my mother!

BARADAS. The Cardinal dies. Yet day revives the earth;
The rivers run not back. In truth, my Liege,
Did your high orb on others shine as him,
Why, things as dull in their own selves as I am
Would glow as brightly with the borrowed beam.

LOUIS. Ahem! He was too stern.

ORLEANS. A very Nero.

BARADAS. His power was like the Capitol of old —
Built on a human skull.

LOUIS. And, had he lived,
I know another head, my Baradas,
That would have propp'd the pile: I've seen him eye thee
With a most hungry fancy.

BARADAS [*anxiously*]. Sire, I knew
You would protect me.

LOUIS. Did you so: of course!
And yet he had a way with him — a something
That always — But no matter, he is dead.
And, after all, men called his King "The Just",
And so I am. Dear Count, this silliest Julie,
I know not why, she takes my fancy. Many
As fair, and certainly more kind; but yet
It is so. Count, I am no lustful Tarquin,
And do abhor the bold and frontless vices
Which the Church justly censures: yet 'tis sad
On rainy days to drag out weary hours,
Deaf to the music of a woman's voice —
Blind to the sunshine of a woman's eyes.
It is no sin in kings to seek amusement;
And that is all I seek. I miss her much.
She has a silver laugh — a rare perfection.

BARADAS. Richelieu was most disloyal in that marriage.

LOUIS [*querulously*]. He knew that Julie pleased me — a clear proof
He never loved me!

BARADAS. Oh, most clear! — But now
No bar between the lady and your will!
This writ makes all secure: a week or two
In the Bastile will sober Mauprat's love,
And leave him eager to dissolve a hymen
That brings him such a home.

LOUIS. See to it, Count;

[*Exit* BARADAS]

I'll summon Julie back. A word with you.

[*Takes aside* FIRST COURTIER *and* DE BERINGHEN, *and passes, conversing with them, through the gardens*]

[*Enter* FRANÇOIS]

FRANÇOIS. All search, as yet, in vain for Mauprat! Not
At home since yesternoon — a soldier told me
He saw him pass this way with hasty strides;
Should he meet Baradas — they'd rend it from him —
And then — benignant Fortune smiles upon me —
I am thy son! — if thou desert'st me now,
Come Death and snatch me from disgrace. But, no,
There's a great Spirit ever in the air
That from prolific and far-spreading wings
Scatters the seeds of honour — yea, the walls
And moats of castled forts — the barren seas —
The cell wherein the pale-eyed student holds
Talk with melodious science — all are sown
With everlasting honours, if our souls
Will toil for fame as boors for bread —

[*Enter* MAUPRAT]

MAUPRAT. Oh, let me —
Let me but meet him foot to foot — I'll dig
The Judas from his heart; — albeit the King
Should o'er him cast the purple!

FRANÇOIS. Mauprat! hold: —
Where is the —

MAUPRAT. Well! What would'st thou?

FRANÇOIS. The despatch!
The packet. — LOOK ON ME — I serve the Cardinal —

You know me. Did you not keep guard last night
By Marion's house?

MAUPRAT. I did: — no matter now! —
They told me, *he* was *here !* —

FRANÇOIS. O joy! quick — quick —
The packet thou didst wrest from me?

MAUPRAT. The packet? —
What, art thou he I deem'd the Cardinal's spy
(Dupe that I was) — and overhearing Marion —

FRANÇOIS. The same — restore it! haste!

MAUPRAT. I have it not:
Methought it but reveal'd our scheme to Richelieu,
And, as we mounted, gave it to —

[*Enter* BARADAS]

Stand back!
Now, villain! now — I have thee!
[*To* FRANÇOIS] — Hence, Sir, *Draw !*

FRANÇOIS. Art mad? — the King's at hand! leave *him* to Richelieu!
Speak — the despatch — to whom —

MAUPRAT [*dashing him aside, and rushing to* BARADAS].
Thou triple slanderer!
I'll set my heel upon thy crest!

[*A few passes*]

FRANÇOIS. Fly — fly!
The King! —

[*Enter at one side* LOUIS, ORLEANS, DE BERINGHEN, COURTIERS, *etc. At the other, the* GUARDS *hastily*]

LOUIS. Swords drawn — before our very palace!
Have our laws died with Richelieu?

BARADAS. Pardon, Sire, —
My crime but self-defence. [*Aside to* KING] It is De Mauprat!

LOUIS. Dare he thus brave us?

[BARADAS *goes to the* GUARD *and gives the writ*]

MAUPRAT. Sire, in the Cardinal's name —

BARADAS. Seize him — disarm — to the Bastile!

[DE MAUPRAT *seized, struggles with the* GUARD. — FRANÇOIS *restlessly endeavouring to pacify and speak to him — when the gates open*]

[*Enter* RICHELIEU *and* JOSEPH, *followed by arquebusiers*]

BARADAS. The Dead
Return'd to life!

LOUIS. What a *mock* death! this tops
The Infinite of Insult.

MAUPRAT [*breaking from* GUARDS]. Priest and Hero!
For you are both — protect the truth! —

RICHELIEU. What's this?

[*Taking the writ from the* GUARD]

DE BERINGHEN. Fact in Philosophy. Foxes have got
Nine lives as well as cats!

BARADAS. Be firm, my Liege.

LOUIS. I have assumed the sceptre — I will wield it!

JOSEPH. The tide runs counter — there'll be shipwreck somewhere.

[BARADAS *and* ORLEANS *keep close to the* KING — *whispering and prompting him when* RICHELIEU *speaks*]

RICHELIEU. High treason. — Faviaux! still that stale pretence!
My Liege, bad men (ay, Count, most *knavish* men!)
Abuse your royal goodness. For this soldier,
France hath none braver, and his youth's hot folly,
Misled (by whom *your Highness* may conjecture!),
Is long since cancell'd by a loyal manhood.
I, Sire, have pardoned him.

LOUIS. And we do give
Your pardon to the winds. Sir, do your duty!

RICHELIEU. What, Sire? you do not know — Oh, pardon me —
You know not yet, that this brave, honest heart
Stood between mine and murder! — Sire, for my sake —
For your old servant's sake — undo this wrong.
See, let me rend the sentence.

LOUIS. At your peril!
This is too much: — Again, Sir, do your duty!

RICHELIEU. Speak not, but go: — I would not see young Valour
So humbled as grey Service!

DE MAUPRAT. Fare you well!
Save Julie and console her.

FRANÇOIS [*aside to* MAUPRAT]. The despatch!
Your fate, foes, life, hang on a word! to whom?

DE MAUPRAT. To Huguet.

FRANÇOIS. Hush! — keep council! silence — hope!

[*Exeunt* MAUPRAT *and* GUARD]

BARADAS [*aside to* FRANÇOIS]. Has he the packet?

FRANÇOIS. He will not reveal —
[*Aside*] Work, brain! beat, heart!
"*There's no such word as fail.*"
[*Exit* FRANÇOIS]

RICHELIEU [*fiercely*]. Room, my Lords, room! — the Minister of France
Can need no intercession with the King.
[*They fall back*]

LOUIS. What means this false report of death, Lord Cardinal?

RICHELIEU. Are you then anger'd, Sire, that I live still?

LOUIS. No; but such artifice —

RICHELIEU. Not mine: — look elsewhere!
Louis — my castle swarm'd with the assassins.

BARADAS [*advancing*]. We have punish'd them already.
Huguet now
In the Bastile. Oh! my Lord, *we* were prompt
To avenge you, *we* were.

RICHELIEU. *We?* Ha! ha! you hear,
My Liege! What page, man, in the last court grammar
Made you a plural? Count, you have seized the *hireling:* —
Sire, shall I name the *master?*

LOUIS. Tush! my Lord,
The old contrivance: — ever does your wit
Invent assassins, — that ambition may
Slay rivals —

RICHELIEU. Rivals, Sire! in what?
Service to France? *I have none!* Lives the man
Whom Europe, paled before your glory, deems
Rival to Armand Richelieu?

LOUIS. What so haughty!
Remember, he who made, can unmake.

RICHELIEU. Never!
Never! Your anger can recall your trust,
Annul my office, spoil me of my lands,
Rifle my coffers, — but my name — my deeds,
Are royal in a land beyond your sceptre!
Pass sentence on me, if you will; from kings,
Lo, I appeal to Time! "Be just, my Liege —
"I found your kingdom rent with heresies
"And bristling with rebellion; lawless nobles
"And breadless serfs; England fomenting discord;
"Austria — her clutch on your dominion; Spain
"Forging the prodigal gold of either Ind
"To armed thunderbolts. The Arts lay dead,
"Trade rotted in your marts, your Armies mutinous,
"Your Treasury bankrupt. Would you now revoke
"Your trust, so be it! and I leave you, sole
"Supremest Monarch of the mightiest realm
"From Ganges to the Icebergs: — Look without,
"No foe not humbled! Look within; the Arts
"Quit for your schools — their old Hesperides
"The golden Italy! while through the veins
"Of your vast empire flows in strengthening tides
"TRADE, the calm health of nations!
Sire, I know
"Your smoother courtiers please you best — nor measure
"Myself with them — yet sometimes I would doubt
"If Statesmen rock'd and dandled into power
"Could leave such legacies to kings!"
[LOUIS *appears irresolute*]

BARADAS [*passing him, whispers*]. But Julie,
Shall I not summon her to Court?

LOUIS [*motions to* BARADAS *and turns haughtily to the* CARDINAL]. Enough!
Your Eminence must excuse a longer audience.
To your own palace: — For our conference, this
Nor place — nor season.

RICHELIEU. Good my Liege, for *Justice*
All place a temple, and all season, summer!
Do you deny me justice? Saints of Heaven!
He turns from me! *Do you deny me justice?*
For fifteen years, while in these hands dwelt Empire,
The humblest craftsman — the obscurest vassal —
The very leper shrinking from the sun,
Tho' loathed by Charity, might ask for justice! —

Not with the fawning tone and crawling mien
Of some I see around you — Counts and Princes —
Kneeling for *favours;* but, erect and loud,
As men who ask man's rights! my Liege, my Louis,
Do you refuse me justice — audience even —
In the pale presence of the baffled Murder?

LOUIS. Lord Cardinal — one by one you have sever'd from me
The bonds of human love. All near and dear
Mark'd out for vengeance — exile or the scaffold.
You find me now amidst my trustiest friends,
My closest kindred; — you would tear them from me;
They murder *you* forsooth, since *me* they love.
Eno' of plots and treasons for one reign!
Home! Home! And sleep away these phantoms!

RICHELIEU. Sire!
I — patience, Heaven! sweet Heaven! — Sire, from the foot
Of that Great Throne, these hands have raised aloft
On an Olympus, looking down on mortals
And worshipp'd by their awe — before the foot
Of that high throne — spurn you the grey-hair'd man,
Who gave you empire — and now sues for safety?

LOUIS. No: — when we see your Eminence in truth
At the *foot* of the throne — we'll listen to you. [*Exit* LOUIS]

ORLEANS. Saved!

BARADAS. For this deep thanks to Julie and to Mauprat.

RICHELIEU. My Lord de Baradas, I pray your pardon —
You are to be my successor! your hand, Sir!

BARADAS [*aside*]. What can this mean?

RICHELIEU. It trembles, see! it trembles!
The hand that holds the destinies of nations
Ought to shake less! poor Baradas! poor France!

BARADAS. Insolent — [*Exeunt*]

SCENE SECOND.

RICHELIEU. Joseph — Did you hear the King?

JOSEPH. I did, — there's danger! Had you been less haughty —

RICHELIEU. And suffer'd slaves to chuckle — "see the Cardinal —
How meek his Eminence is to-day." I tell thee
This is a strife in which the loftiest look
Is the most subtle armour —

JOSEPH. But —

RICHELIEU. No time
For ifs and buts. I will accuse these traitors!
François shall witness that De Baradas
Gave him the secret missive for De Bouillon,
And told him life and death were in the scroll.
I will — I will —

JOSEPH. Tush! François is your creature;
So they will say and laugh at you! — *your witness*
Must be that same Despatch.

RICHELIEU. Away to Marion!

JOSEPH. I have been there — she is seized — removed — imprisoned —
By the Count's orders.

RICHELIEU. Goddess of bright dreams,
My Country — shalt thou lose me now, when most
Thou need'st thy worshipper? My native land!
Let me but ward this dagger from thy heart,
And die — but on thy bosom.

[*Enter* JULIE]

JULIE. Heaven! I thank thee!
It cannot be, or this all-powerful man
Would not stand idly thus.

RICHELIEU. What dost *thou* here?
Home!

JULIE. Home! is *Adrien there?* — you're dumb — yet strive
For words; I see them trembling on your lip,
But choked by pity. It *was* truth — all truth!
Seized — the Bastile — and in your presence too!
Cardinal, where is Adrien? Think — he saved
Your life: — your name is infamy, if wrong

Should come to his!
RICHELIEU. Be sooth'd, child.
JULIE. Child no more;
I love, and I am woman! Hope and suffer —
Love, suffering, hope, — what else does make the strength
And majesty of woman? Where is Adrien?
RICHELIEU. [*To* JOSEPH] Your youth was never young — you never loved;
Speak to her —
JOSEPH. Nay, take heed — the King's command,
'Tis true — I mean — the —
JULIE. [*To* RICHELIEU] Let thine eyes meet mine;
Answer me but one word — I am a wife —
I ask thee for my *home* — my FATE — my ALL!
Where is my *husband?*
RICHELIEU. You are Richelieu's ward,
A soldier's bride: they who insist on truth
Must out-face fear; you ask me for your husband!
There — where the clouds of heaven look darkest, o'er
The domes of the Bastile!
JULIE. I thank you, father,
You see I do not shudder. Heaven forgive you
The sin of this desertion!
RICHELIEU [*detaining her*]. Whither would'st thou?
JULIE. Stay me not. Fie; I should be there already.
I am thy ward, and haply he may think
Thou'st taught *me* also to forsake the wretched!
RICHELIEU. I've fill'd those cells — with many — traitors all.
Had *they* wives too? Thy memories, Power, are solemn!
Poor sufferer! think'st thou that yon gates of woe
Unbar to love? Alas! if love once enter,
'Tis for the last farewell; between those walls
And the mute grave — the blessed household sounds
Only heard once — while hungering at the door,
The headsman whets the axe.
JULIE. O, mercy, mercy!
Save him, restore him, father! Art thou not
The Cardinal-King? — the Lord of life and death —
Beneath whose light as deeps beneath the moon,
The solemn tides of Empire ebb and flow? —
Art thou not Richelieu?
RICHELIEU. Yesterday I was! —
To-day a very weak old man! To-morrow,
I know not what!
JULIE. Do you conceive his meaning?
Alas! I cannot. But, methinks, my senses
Are duller than they were!
JOSEPH. The King is chafed
Against his servant. Lady, while we speak,
The lackey of the ante-room is not
More powerless than the Minister of France.
"RICHELIEU. And yet the air is still; Heaven wears no cloud;
"From Nature's silent orbit starts no portent
"To warn the unconscious world; albeit, this night
"May with a morrow teem which, in my fall,
"Would carry earthquake to remotest lands,
"And change the Christian globe. What would'st thou, woman?
"Thy fate and his, with mine, for good or ill,
"Are woven threads. In my vast sum of life,
"Millions such units merge."

[*Enter* FIRST COURTIER]

FIRST COURTIER. Madame de Mauprat!
Pardon, your Eminence — even now I seek
This lady's home — commanded by the King
To pray her presence.
JULIE [*clinging to* RICHELIEU]. Think of my dead father! —
Think, how, an infant, clinging to your knees,
And looking to your eyes, the wrinkled care
Fled from your brow before the smile of childhood,
Fresh from the dews of heaven! Think of this,
And take me to your breast.
RICHELIEU. To those who sent you! —

And say, you found the virtue they would slay
Here — couch'd upon this heart, as at an altar,
And sheltered by the wings of sacred Rome!
Be gone!

FIRST COURTIER. My Lord, I am your friend and servant —
Misjudge me not; but never yet was Louis
So roused against you: — shall I take this answer? —
It were to be your foe.

RICHELIEU. All time my foe
If I a Priest could cast this holy Sorrow
Forth from her last Asylum!

FIRST COURTIER. He is lost! [*Exit*]

RICHELIEU. God help thee, child! — she hears not! Look upon her!
The storm that rends the oak, uproots the flower.
Her father loved me so! and in that age
When friends are brothers! She has been to me
Soother, nurse, plaything, daughter. Are these tears?
Oh! shame, shame! — dotage!

JOSEPH. Tears are not for eyes
That rather need the lightning, which can pierce
Through barred gates and triple walls, to smite
Crime, where it cowers in secret! The Despatch!
Set every spy to work; the morrow's sun
Must see that written treason in your hands,
Or rise upon your ruin.

RICHELIEU. Ay — and close
Upon my corpse! I am not made to live —
Friends, glory, France, all reft from me; — my star
Like some vain holiday mimicry of fire,
Piercing imperial heaven, and falling down
Rayless and blacken'd to the dust — a thing
For all men's feet to trample! Yea! to-morrow
Triumph or death! Look up, child! — Lead us, Joseph.

[*As they are going out*]

[*Enter* BARADAS *and* DE BERINGHEN]

BARADAS. My Lord, the King cannot believe your Eminence
So far forgets your duty, and his greatness,
As to resist his mandate! Pray you, Madam,
Obey the King — no cause for fear!

JULIE. My father!

RICHELIEU. She shall not stir!

BARADAS. You are not of her kindred —
An orphan —

RICHELIEU. And her country is her mother!

BARADAS. The country is the King!

RICHELIEU. Ay, is it so?
Then wakes the power which in the age of iron
Burst forth to curb the great, and raise the low.
Mark, where she stands, around her form I draw
The awful circle of our solemn Church!
Set but a foot within that holy ground,
And on thy head — yea, though it wore a crown —
I launch the curse of Rome!

BARADAS. I dare not brave you!
I do but speak the orders of my King.
The Church, your rank, power, very word, my Lord,
Suffice you for resistance: — blame yourself,
If it should cost you power!

RICHELIEU. That *my* stake. Ah!
Dark gamester! *what is thine?* Look to it well! —
Lose not a trick. By this same hour to-morrow
Thou shalt have France, or I thy head!

BARADAS [*aside to* DE BERINGHEN]. He cannot
Have the despatch?

DE BERINGHEN. No: were it so, your stake
Were lost already.

JOSEPH [*aside*]. Patience is your game:
Reflect you have not the Despatch!

RICHELIEU. O! monk!
Leave patience to the saints — for *I* am human!
Did not thy father die for France, poor orphan?
And now they say thou hast *no* father! Fie!
Art thou not pure and good? if so, thou art
A part of that —— the Beautiful, the Sacred ——
Which in all climes, men that have hearts adore,
By the great title of their mother country!

BARADAS [*aside*]. He wanders!

RICHELIEU. So cling close unto my breast,
Here where thou droop'st — lies France! I am very feeble —
Of little use it seems to either now.
Well, well — we will go home.

BARADAS. In sooth, my Lord,
You do need rest — the burthens of the State
O'ertask your health!

RICHELIEU. [*To* JOSEPH] I'm patient, see?

BARADAS [*aside*]. His mind
And life are breaking fast!

RICHELIEU [*overhearing him*]. Irreverent ribald!
If so, beware the falling ruins! Hark!
I tell thee, scorner of these whitening hairs,
When this snow melteth there shall come a flood!
Avaunt! my name is Richelieu — I defy thee!
Walk blindfold on; behind thee stalks the headsman.
Ha! ha! — how pale he is! Heaven save my country!

[*Falls back in* JOSEPH'S *arms*]

[*Exit* BARADAS *followed by* DE BERINGHEN, *betraying his exultation by his gestures*]

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

SCENE FIRST. — *The Bastile — a corridor — in the background the door of one of the condemned cells.*

[*Enter* JOSEPH *and* GAOLER]

GAOLER. Stay, father, I will call the governor. [*Exit* GAOLER]

JOSEPH. He has it, then — this Huguet; — so we learn
From François — Hump! Now if I can but gain
One moment's access, all is ours! The Cardinal
Trembles 'tween life and death. His life is power: —
Smite one — slay both! No Æsculapian drugs,
By learned quacks baptised with Latin jargon,
E'er bore the healing which that scrap of parchment
Will medicine to Ambition's flagging heart.
France shall be saved — and Joseph be a bishop!

[*Enter* GOVERNOR *and* GAOLER]

GOVERNOR. Father, you wish to see the prisoners Huguet
And the young knight De Mauprat?

JOSEPH. So my office,
And the Lord Cardinal's order warrant, son!

GOVERNOR. Father, it cannot be: Count Baradas
Has summon'd to the Louvre Sieur De Mauprat.

JOSEPH. Well, well! But Huguet —

GOVERNOR. Dies at noon.

JOSEPH. At noon!
No moment to delay the pious rites
Which fit the soul for death — quick, quick — admit me!

GOVERNOR. You cannot enter, monk! Such are my orders!

JOSEPH. Orders! vain man! — the Cardinal still is minister.
His orders crush all others!

GOVERNOR [*lifting his hat*]. Save his King's!
See, monk, the royal sign and seal affix'd
To the Count's mandate. None may have access
To either prisoner, Huguet or De Mauprat,
Not even a priest, without the special passport
Of Count de Baradas. I'll hear no more!

JOSEPH. Just Heaven! and are we baffled thus! — Despair!
Think on the Cardinal's power — beware his anger.

GOVERNOR. I'll not be menaced, Priest! Besides, the Cardinal
Is dying and disgraced — all Paris knows it.
You hear the prisoner's knell.

[*Bell tolls*]

JOSEPH. I do beseech you —
The Cardinal is *not* dying — But one moment,
And — hist! — five thousand pistoles! —

GOVERNOR. How! a bribe,
And to a soldier, grey with years of honour?
Begone! —

JOSEPH. Ten thousand — twenty! —

GOVERNOR. Gaoler — put
This monk without our walls.

JOSEPH. By those grey hairs,
Yea, by this badge [*touching the Cross of*

St. Louis worn by the GOVERNOR]
— the guerdon of your valour —
By all your toils, hard days and sleepless nights —
Borne in your country's service, noble son —
Let me but see the prisoner! —

GOVERNOR. No! —

JOSEPH. He hath
Secrets of state — papers in which —

GOVERNOR [*interrupting*]. I know,
Such was his message to Count Baradas.
Doubtless the Count will see to it.

JOSEPH. The Count!
Then not a hope! — You shall —

GOVERNOR. Betray my trust!
Never — not one word more — you heard me, gaoler?

JOSEPH. What can be done? — distraction! — Richelieu yet
Must — what? — I know not — thought, nerve, strength, forsake me.
Dare you refuse the Church her holiest rights?

GOVERNOR. I refuse nothing — I obey my orders —

JOSEPH. And sell your country to her parricides!
Oh, tremble yet! — Richelieu —

GOVERNOR. Begone!

JOSEPH. Undone! [*Exit* JOSEPH]

GOVERNOR. A most audacious shaveling, interdicted
Above all others by the Count —

GAOLER. I hope, Sir,
I shall not lose my perquisites. The Sieur
De Mauprat will not be reprieved?

GOVERNOR. Oh, fear not.
The Count's commands by him who came for Mauprat
Are to prepare headsman and axe by noon;
The Count will give you perquisites enough;
Two deaths in one day!

GAOLER. Sir, may Heaven reward him!
Oh, by the way, that troublesome young fellow,
Who calls himself the prisoner Huguet's son,
Is here again — implores, weeps, raves, to see him.

GOVERNOR. Poor youth, I pity him!

[*Enter* DE BERINGHEN, *followed by* FRANÇOIS]

DE BERINGHEN. [*To* FRANÇOIS] Now, prithee, friend,
Let go my cloak; you really discompose me.

FRANÇOIS. No, they will drive me hence; my father! Oh!
Let me but see him once — but once — one moment!

DE BERINGHEN. [*To* GOVERNOR] Your servant, Messire, — this poor rascal, Huguet,
Has sent to see the Count de Baradas
Upon state secrets, that afflict his conscience.
The Count can't leave his Majesty an instant:
I am his proxy.

GOVERNOR. The Count's word is law!
Again, young scapegrace! How com'st thou admitted?

DE BERINGHEN. Oh, a most filial fellow: Huguet's son!
I found him whimpering in the court below.
I pray his leave to say good-bye to father,
Before that very long unpleasant journey
Father's about to take. Let him wait here
Till I return.

FRANÇOIS. No; take me with you.

DE BERINGHEN. Nay;
After *me*, friend — the Public first!

GOVERNOR. The Count's
Commands are strict. No one must visit Huguet
Without his passport.

DE BERINGHEN. Here it is! Pshaw! nonsense!
I'll be your surety. See, my Cerberus,
He is no Hercules!

GOVERNOR. Well, you're responsible.
Stand there, friend. If, when you come out, my Lord,
The youth slip in, 'tis *your* fault.

DE BERINGHEN. So it is!
[*Exit through the door of the cell followed by the* GAOLER]

GOVERNOR. Be calm, my lad. Don't fret so. I had once
A father too! I'll not be hard upon you,
And so stand close. I must not see you enter:
You understand. Between this innocent youth
And that intriguing monk there is, in truth,
A wide distinction.

[*Re-enter* GAOLER]

Come, we'll go our rounds;
I'll give you just one quarter of an hour;
And if my Lord leave first, make my excuse.
Yet stay, the gallery's long and dark; no sentry
Until he reach the grate below. He'd best
Wait till I come. If he should lose the way,
We may not be in call.

FRANÇOIS. I'll tell him, Sir —

[*Exeunt* GOVERNOR *and* GAOLER]

He's a wise son that knoweth his own father.
I've forged a precious one! So far, so well!
Alas, what then? this wretch has sent to Baradas —
Will sell the scroll to ransom life. Oh, Heaven!
On what a thread hangs hope!

[*Listens at the door*]

Loud words — a cry!

[*Looks through the key-hole*]

They struggle! Ho! — the packet!!!

[*Tries to open the door*] Lost! He has it —
The courtier has it — Huguet, spite his chains,
Grapples! — well done! Now, now!

[*Draws back*]

The gallery's long!
And this is left us!

[*Drawing his dagger, and standing behind the door*]

[*Re-enter* DE BERINGHEN, *with the packet*]

Victory!
Yield it, robber —
Yield it — or die — [*A short struggle*]

DE BERINGHEN. Off! ho! — there!

FRANÇOIS [*grappling with him*]. Death or honour! [*Exeunt struggling*]

SCENE THIRD. — *The* KING'S *closet at the Louvre. A suite of rooms in perspective at one side.*

[BARADAS *and* ORLEANS]

BARADAS. All smiles! the Cardinal's swoon of yesterday
Heralds his death to-day; could he survive,
It would not be as minister — so great
The King's resentment at the priest's defiance.
All smiles! and yet, should this accurs'd De Mauprat
Have given our packet to another. — 'Sdeath!
I dare not think of it!

ORLEANS. You've sent to search him?

BARADAS. Sent, Sir, to search? — that hireling hands may find
Upon him, naked, with its broken seal,
That scroll, whose every word is death! No — no —
These hands alone must clutch that awful secret.
I dare not leave the palace, night or day,
While Richelieu lives — his minions — creatures — spies —
Not one must reach the King!

ORLEANS. What hast thou done?

BARADAS. Summon'd De Mauprat hither!

ORLEANS. Could this Huguet,
Who pray'd thy presence with so fierce a fervour,
Have thieved the scroll?

BARADAS. Huguet was housed with us,
The very moment we dismiss'd the courier.
It cannot be! a stale trick for reprieve.
But, to make sure, I've sent our trustiest friend
To see and sift him — Hist! here comes the King.
How fare you, Sire?

[*Enter* LOUIS]

LOUIS. In the same mind, I have
Decided! yes, he would forbid your presence,
My brother, — your's, my friend, then Julie, too;
Thwarts — braves — defies — [*Suddenly turning to* BARADAS] We make you minister.
Gaston, for you — the baton of our armies.
You love me, do you not?

ORLEANS. Oh, love you, Sire?
[*Aside*] Never so much as now.

BARADAS. May I deserve
Your trust [*aside*] — until you sign your abdication!
My Liege, but one way left to daunt De Mauprat,
And Julie to divorce. — We must prepare
The death-writ; what, tho' sign'd and seal'd? we can
Withhold the enforcement.

LOUIS. Ah, you may prepare it;
We need not urge it to effect.

BARADAS. Exactly!
No haste, my Liege. [*Looking at his watch and aside*] He may live one hour longer.

[*Enter* COURTIER]

COURTIER. The Lady Julie, Sire, implores an audience.

LOUIS. Aha! repentant of her folly! — Well,
Admit her.

BARADAS. Sire, she comes for Mauprat's pardon,
And the conditions —

LOUIS. You are minister,
We leave to you our answer.

[*As* JULIE *enters, — the* CAPTAIN *of the* ARCHERS, *by another door — and whispers* BARADAS]

CAPTAIN. The Chevalier
De Mauprat waits below.

BARADAS [*aside*]. Now the despatch! [*Exit with* OFFICER]

[*Enter* JULIE]

JULIE. My Liege, you sent for me. I come where Grief
Should come when guiltless, while the name of King
Is holy on the earth! — Here, at the feet
Of Power, I kneel for mercy.

LOUIS. Mercy, Julie,
Is an affair of state. The Cardinal should
In this be your interpreter.

JULIE. Alas!
I know not if that mighty spirit now
Stoop to the things of earth. Nay, while I speak,
Perchance he hears the orphan by the throne
Where kings themselves need pardon; O, my Liege,
Be father to the fatherless; in you
Dwells my last hope!

[*Enter* BARADAS]

BARADAS [*aside*]. He has not the despatch;
Smiled, while we search'd, and braves me. — Oh!

LOUIS [*gently*]. What would'st thou?

JULIE. A single life. — You reign o'er millions. — What
Is *one man's* life to you? — and yet to *me*
'Tis France, — 'tis earth, — 'tis everything! — a life —
A human life — my husband's.

LOUIS [*aside*]. Speak to her,
I am not marble, — give her hope — or —

BARADAS. Madam,
Vex not your King, whose heart, too soft for justice,
Leaves to his ministers that solemn charge. [LOUIS *walks up the stage*]

JULIE. You *were* his friend.

BARADAS. I *was* before I loved thee.

JULIE. Loved me!

BARADAS. Hush, Julie: could'st thou misinterpret
My acts, thoughts, motives, nay, my very words,
Here — in this palace?

JULIE. Now I know I'm mad,
Even that memory fail'd me.

BARADAS. I am young,
Well-born and brave as Mauprat: — for thy sake
I peril what he has not — fortune — power;
All to great souls most dazzling. I alone
Can save thee from yon tyrant, now my puppet!
Be mine; annul the mockery of this marriage,
And on the day I clasp thee to my breast
De Mauprat shall be free.

JULIE. Thou durst not speak
Thus in *his* ear. [*Pointing to* LOUIS]
Thou double traitor! — tremble.
I will unmask thee.

BARADAS. I will say thou ravest,
And see this scroll! its letters shall be blood!
Go to the King, count with me word for word;
And while you pray the life — I write the sentence!

JULIE. Stay, stay. [*Rushing to the* KING] You have a kind and princely heart,
Tho' sometimes it is silent: you were born
To *power* — it has not flushed you into madness,
As it doth meaner men. Banish my husband —
Dissolve our marriage — cast me to the grave
Of human ties, where hearts congeal to ice,
In the dark convent's everlasting winter —
(Surely eno' for justice — hate — revenge —)

But spare this life, thus lonely, scathed, and bloomless;
And when thou stand'st for judgment on thine own,
The deed shall shine beside thee as an angel.

LOUIS [*much affected*]. Go, go, to Baradas: and annul thy marriage,
And —

JULIE [*anxiously, and watching his countenance*]. Be his bride!

LOUIS. A form, a mere decorum.
Thou know'st I love thee.

JULIE. O thou sea of shame,
And not one star.

[*The* KING *goes up the stage and passes through the suite of rooms at the side in evident emotion*]

BARADAS. Well, thy election, Julie;
This hand — his grave!

JULIE. His grave! and I —

BARADAS. Can save him.
Swear to be mine.

JULIE. That were a bitterer death!
Avaunt, thou tempter! I did ask his life
A boon, and not the barter of dishonour.
The heart can break, and scorn you: wreak your malice;
Adrien and I will leave you this sad earth,
And pass together hand in hand to Heaven!

BARADAS. You have decided. [*Withdraws to the side scene for a moment and returns*] Listen to me, Lady;
I am no base intriguer. I adored thee
From the first glance of those inspiring eyes;
With thee entwined ambition, hope, the future.
I will not lose thee! I can place thee nearest —
Ay, to the throne — nay, on the throne, perchance;
My star is at its zenith. Look upon me;
Hast thou decided?

JULIE. No, no; you can see
How weak I am, be human, Sir — one moment.

BARADAS. [*Stamping his foot.* DE MAUPRAT *appears at the side of the Stage guarded*]
Behold thy husband! — Shall he pass to death,
And know thou could'st have saved him?

JULIE. Adrien, speak!
But say you wish to *live!* — if not your wife,
Your slave, — do with me as you will!

DE MAUPRAT. Once more! —
Why, this is mercy, Count! Oh, think, my Julie,
Life, at the best, is short, — but love immortal!

BARADAS [*taking* JULIE'S *hand*]. Ah, loveliest —

JULIE. Go, that touch has made me iron.
We have decided — death!

BARADAS. [*To* DE MAUPRAT] Now, say to whom
Thou gavest the packet, and thou yet shalt live.

DE MAUPRAT. I'll tell thee nothing!

BARADAS. Hark, — the rack!

DE MAUPRAT. Thy penance
For ever, wretch! — What rack is like the conscience?

JULIE. I shall be with thee soon.

BARADAS [*giving the writ to the* OFFICER]. Hence, to the headsman.

[*The doors are thrown open. The* HUSSIER *announces "His Eminence the Cardinal Duke de Richelieu"*]

[*Enter* RICHELIEU, *attended by* GENTLEMEN, PAGES, *etc., pale, feeble, and leaning on* JOSEPH, *followed by* SECRETARIES OF STATE, *attended by three* SUB-SECRETARIES *with papers, etc.*]

JULIE [*rushing to* RICHELIEU]. You live — you live — and Adrien shall not die!

RICHELIEU. Not if an old man's prayers, himself near death,
Can aught avail thee, daughter! Count, you now
Hold what I held on earth: — one boon, my Lord,
This soldier's life.

BARADAS. The stake — my head! — you said it.
I cannot lose one trick. Remove your prisoner.

JULIE. No! — No! —

[*Enter* LOUIS *from the rooms beyond*]

RICHELIEU. [*To* OFFICER] Stay, Sir, one moment. My good Liege,
Your worn-out servant, willing, Sire, to spare you
Some pain of conscience, would forestall your wishes.
I do resign my office.

DE MAUPRAT. You?

JULIE. All's over!

RICHELIEU. My end draws near.
These sad ones, Sire, I love them,
I do not ask his life; but suffer justice
To halt, until I can dismiss his soul,
Charged with an old man's blessing.

LOUIS. Surely!

BARADAS. Sire —

LOUIS. Silence — small favour to a dying servant.

RICHELIEU. You would consign your armies to the baton
Of your most honour'd brother. Sire, so be it!
Your minister, the Count de Baradas;
A most sagacious choice! — Your Secretaries
Of State attend me, Sire, to render up
The ledgers of a realm. — I do beseech you,
Suffer these noble gentlemen to learn
The nature of the glorious task that waits them,
Here, in my presence.

LOUIS. You say well, my Lord. [*To* SECRETARIES *as he seats himself*]. Approach, Sirs.

RICHELIEU. I — I — faint! — air — air.

[JOSEPH *and a* GENTLEMAN *assist him to a sofa, placed beneath a window*]

I thank you —
Draw near, my children.

BARADAS. He's too weak to question,
Nay, scarce to speak; all's safe.

SCENE THIRD. — *Manent* RICHELIEU, MAUPRAT *and* JULIE, *the last kneeling beside the* CARDINAL; *the* OFFICER OF THE GUARD *behind* MAUPRAT. JOSEPH *near* RICHELIEU, *watching the* KING. LOUIS. BARADAS *at the back of the* KING'S *chair, anxious and disturbed.* ORLEANS *at a greater distance, careless and triumphant. The* SECRETARIES. *As each* SECRETARY *advances in his turn, he takes the portfolios from the* SUB-SECRETARIES.

FIRST SECRETARY. The affairs of Portugal,
Most urgent, Sire — One short month since the Duke
Braganza was a rebel.

LOUIS. And is still!

FIRST SECRETARY. No, Sire, *he has succeeded!* He is now
Crown'd King of Portugal — craves instant succour
Against the arms of Spain.

LOUIS. We will not grant it
Against his lawful King. Eh, Count?

BARADAS. No, Sire.

FIRST SECRETARY. But Spain's your deadliest foe; whatever
Can weaken Spain must strengthen France. The Cardinal
Would send the succours; — [*solemnly*] — balance, Sire, of Europe!

LOUIS. The Cardinal! — balance! — We'll consider — Eh, Count?

BARADAS. Yes, Sire; — fall back.

FIRST SECRETARY. But —

BARADAS. Oh, fall back, Sir!

JOSEPH. Humph!

SECOND SECRETARY. The affairs of England, Sire, most urgent; Charles
The First has lost a battle that decides
One half his realm — craves moneys, Sire, and succour.

LOUIS. He shall have both. — Eh, Baradas?

BARADAS. Yes, Sire.
(Oh, that despatch! — my veins are fire!)

RICHELIEU [*feebly, but with great distinctness*]. My Liege —
Forgive me — Charles' cause is lost. A man,
Named Cromwell, risen, — a great man! — your succour
Would fail — your loans be squander'd! Pause — reflect.

LOUIS. Reflect — Eh, Baradas?

BARADAS. Reflect, Sire.

JOSEPH. Humph!

LOUIS [*aside*]. I half repent! No successor to Richelieu!
Round me thrones totter! dynasties dissolve!
The soil he guards alone escapes the earthquake!

JOSEPH. Our star not yet eclipsed! — you mark the King?
Oh! had we the despatch!

RICHELIEU. Ah! Joseph! Child —
Would I could help thee.

[*Enter* GENTLEMAN, *whispers* JOSEPH, *they exeunt hastily*]

BARADAS. [*To* SECRETARY] Sir, fall back!

SECOND SECRETARY. But —

BARADAS. Pshaw, Sir!

THIRD SECRETARY [*mysteriously*]. *The secret correspondence*, Sire, most urgent —
Accounts of spies — deserters — heretics —

Assassins — poisoners — schemes against yourself!

LOUIS. *Myself!* — most urgent! [*Looking on the documents*]

[*Re-enter* JOSEPH *with* FRANÇOIS, *whose pourpoint is streaked with blood.* FRANÇOIS *passes behind the* CARDINAL'S *attendants, and sheltered by them from the sight of* BARADAS, *etc., falls at* RICHELIEU'S *feet*]

FRANÇOIS. O! my Lord!

RICHELIEU. Thou art bleeding!

FRANÇOIS. A scratch — I have not fail'd! [*Gives the packet*]

RICHELIEU. Hush! [*Looking at the contents*]

THIRD SECRETARY. [*To* KING] Sire, the Spaniards
Have reinforced their army on the frontiers.
The Duc de Bouillon —

RICHELIEU. Hold! In this department —
A paper — here, Sire — read yourself — then take
The Count's advice in 't.

[*Enter* DE BERINGHEN *hastily, and draws aside* BARADAS]

[RICHELIEU, *to* SECRETARY, *giving an open parchment*]

BARADAS [*bursting from* DE BERINGHEN]. What! and reft it from thee!
Ha! — hold!

JOSEPH. Fall back, son, — it is your turn now!

BARADAS. Death! — the Despatch!

LOUIS [*reading*]. To Bouillon — and sign'd Orleans! —
Baradas, too! — league with our foes of Spain! —
Lead our Italian armies — what! to Paris! —
Capture the King — my health require repose —
Make me subscribe my proper abdication —
Orleans, my brother, Regent! — Saints of Heaven!
These are the men I loved!

[BARADAS *draws, — attempts to rush out, — is arrested.* ORLEANS, *endeavouring to escape more quickly, meets* JOSEPH'S *eye and stops short.* RICHELIEU *falls back*]

JOSEPH. See to the Cardinal.

BARADAS. He's dying! — and I yet shall dupe the King.

LOUIS [*rushing to* RICHELIEU]. Richelieu! — Lord Cardinal! — 'tis *I* resign!
Reign thou!

JOSEPH. Alas! too late! — he faints!

LOUIS. Reign, Richelieu!

RICHELIEU [*feebly*]. With absolute power?

LOUIS. Most absolute! Oh, live!
If not for me — for France!

RICHELIEU. FRANCE!

LOUIS. Ah! this treason!
The army — Orleans — Bouillon! Heavens! — the Spaniard!
Where will they be next week?

RICHELIEU [*starting up*]. There, — at my feet!

[*To* FIRST *and* SECOND SECRETARIES]

Ere the clock strike! —
The Envoys have their answer!

[*To* THIRD SECRETARY, *with a ring*]

This to De Chavigny — he knows the rest —
No need of parchment here — he must not halt
For sleep — for food — In *my* name — MINE — he will
Arrest the Duc de Bouillon at the head
Of his army! Ho! there, Count de Baradas.
Thou hast lost the stake. — Away with him!

[*As the* GUARDS *open the folding-doors, a view of the ante-room beyond, lined with* COURTIERS. BARADAS *passes thro' the line*]

Ha! — ha! —

[*Snatching* DE MAUPRAT'S *death warrant from the* OFFICER]

See here, De Mauprat's death-writ, Julie! —
Parchment for battledores! — Embrace your husband!
At last the old man blesses you!

JULIE. Oh, joy!
You are saved, you live — I hold you in these arms!

DE MAUPRAT. Never to part —

JULIE. No — never, Adrien — never!

LOUIS [*peevishly*]. One moment makes a startling cure, Lord Cardinal.

RICHELIEU. Ay, Sire; for in one moment there did pass
Into this wither'd frame the might of France! —
My own dear France. — I have thee yet — I have saved thee!
I clasp thee still! it was thy voice that call'd me

Back from the tomb! What mistress like our country?

LOUIS. For Mauprat's pardon — well! But Julie, — Richelieu,
Leave me one thing to love!

RICHELIEU. A subject's luxury!
Yet, if you must love something, Sire — *love me!*

LOUIS [*smiling in spite of himself*] Fair proxy for a fresh young Demoiselle!

RICHELIEU. Your heart speaks for my clients: — Kneel, my children —
And thank your King —

JULIE. Ah, tears like these, my Liege,
Are dews that mount to Heaven.

LOUIS. Rise — rise — be happy! [*Retires*]

[RICHELIEU *beckons to* DE BERINGHEN]

DE BERINGHEN [*falteringly*]. My Lord — you are — most — happily recover'd.

RICHELIEU. But you are pale, dear Beringhen: — this air
Suits not your delicate frame — I long have thought so:
Sleep not another night in Paris: — Go, —
Or else your precious life may be in danger.
Leave France, dear Beringhen!

DE BERINGHEN. I shall have time,
More than I ask'd for, — to discuss the pâté. [*Exit*]

RICHELIEU. [*To* ORLEANS] For you, repentance — absence, and confession!
[*To* FRANÇOIS] Never say *fail* again. Brave Boy!
[*To* JOSEPH] He'll be —
A Bishop first.

JOSEPH. Ah, Cardinal —

RICHELIEU. Ah, Joseph!

[*To* LOUIS, *as* DE MAUPRAT *and* JULIE *converse apart*]

See, my Liege — see thro' plots and counterplots —
Thro' gain and loss — thro' glory and disgrace —
Along the plains, where passionate Discord rears
Eternal Babel — still the holy stream
Of human happiness glides on!

LOUIS. And must we
Thank for *that* also — our prime minister?

RICHELIEU. No — let us own it: — there is ONE above
Sways the harmonious mystery of the world
Ev'n better than prime ministers.
Alas!
Our glories float between the earth and heaven
Like clouds that seem pavilions of the sun,
And are the playthings of the casual wind;
Still, like the cloud which drops on unseen crags
The dews the wild flower feeds on, our ambition
May from its airy height drop gladness down
On unsuspected virtue; — and the flower
May bless the cloud when it hath pass'd away!

THE END

LONDON ASSURANCE

A COMEDY

(1841)

By Dion Boucicault

DION BOUCICAULT

(1822–1890)

It was Aubrey Boucicault who said, "I generally have to start at the beginning of the alphabet when I attempt to recall all the plays my father wrote." Yet, though the number was over four hundred, a few of them, "London Assurance", "The Colleen Bawn", and "The Shaughraun" being the most typical, are sufficient to represent the special features characterizing the genial Irishman's work. Boucicault was destined to influence many future melodramatists. But his comedy of manners was, all told, only a prosaic imitation of what was most sprightly and artificial in Goldsmith and Sheridan.

Because Boucicault was so intimately associated with theatrical life, his genius was narrowed through his facility in stagecraft, which made him strain character for situation. Edgar Allan Poe, in his estimate of Mrs. Mowatt, the actress, and the author of the American comedy, "Fashion", referred to "that despicable mass of inanity 'London Assurance.'" However sweeping this opinion may be, it warns us to approach the Boucicault drama from across the footlights and not at closer range.

The playwright was born at Dublin, December 26, 1822, and was christened Dionysius Lardner Boucicault, a compliment to the great philologist, Dr. Lardner, satirized by Thackeray in the "Yellowplush Papers." On his father's side he inherited a French strain, seen in the gradual evolution of his name from *Bosquet* to *Boursiquot*, to *Bourcicault*, with the later dropping of the *r*. It was on his mother's side that Boucicault received his greatest heritage. She was a Miss Darley, sister of the essayist and dramatist, George Darley, as well as sister of the Reverend Charles Darley, author of "Plighted Troth."

Young Boucicault had reached the age of nineteen when he wrote his first play. The early accounts of his education are conflicting, it being believed in one quarter that he was placed with Stephenson, the inventor of the steam locomotive, and that he had the honour of riding on the first steam engine that ran between Liverpool and Manchester. There is another theory that he attended London University, counting among his friends, Charles Lamb Kenney, a namesake of *Elia*. Pascoe says that Dublin was his school centre.

However that may be, he joined a dramatic company in 1838, and had attained some small reputation as an actor when he met success with the first of his dramas, "London Assurance", given its première at Covent Garden, on March 4, 1841. The name adopted for the comedy was a hasty substitute; for, just before the curtain rose, the play was known as "Out of Town."

> It will not bear analysis as a literary production [the author wrote in a preface to the second edition of the printed play]. In fact, my sole object is to

> throw together a few scenes of a dramatic nature, and therefore I studied the stage rather than the moral effect. I attempted to instil a pungency into the dialogue, and to procure vivid tones by a strong antithesis of character. The moral which I intended to convey is expressed in the last speech of the comedy, but as I wrote "currente calamo" I have doubtless through the play strayed far wide of my original intent.

"Barefaced assurance is the vulgar substitute for gentlemanly ease," says Sir Harcourt Courtley. ". . . The title of gentleman is the only one out of any monarch's gift, yet within the reach of every peasant." This is the substance of that last speech.

As Boucicault said, the "motive" was not sufficiently emphasized, but the stage pictures were effective and the characters afforded ample scope for good acting.

Boucicault's own account of his début as a dramatist, coloured with the tinge of pleasant romance, is to be found in the *North American Review*, January–June, 1889. He has told in a minute way his feelings as he took the play to Charles Mathews, who first read it as a one-act piece. The whole drama was cut after a conventional model, of which "The School for Scandal" is a most vivid example. Boucicault was too young to do aught but reflect what he either had heard or had read. For such a young man, the play exhibited remarkable efficiency and surety in dialogue besides possessing theatrical richness. Once, Boucicault spoke of wit as not possessing a soft and genial quality — of its being more admirable than endearing, and he condemned its application as heartless. For this very reason, he stigmatized "The School for Scandal" as the most cold-blooded drama on the stage.

But in writing "London Assurance", it cannot be denied that Boucicault's eye was on this more polished comedy of the eighteenth century. Nor, after all, was there much originality in "London Assurance", for, in other forms, its plot had been used before, and John Brougham came forward claiming his share, not only in the conception of the part of *Dazzle*, but in the construction of the entire piece. Lester Wallack, the American actor, came to the rescue of Brougham in the dispute which followed. But the latter was not over-anxious to receive his just deserts, whatever they might have been, his friends being the only ones who persisted in pushing the dispute. Finally, the two authors went to an attorney's office in London, and there Brougham prepared a statement as to his exact share in the work, and forthwith signed away all further claims on receipt of a very substantial check from Boucicault. The legal dispute left no marked ill-feeling, since Brougham afterwards appeared in many of the Boucicault dramas. Among them, he played in "The Shaughraun." The text for this Irish comedy is included in the third volume of the present author's "Representative Plays by American Dramatists."

Such a misunderstanding at the outset of the dramatist's career is significant. It was to be repeated many times during the years to come. In fact, Charles Reade once wrote:

> Like Shakespeare and Molière, the beggar [meaning Boucicault] steals everything he can lay his hands on; but he does it so deftly, so cleverly, that I can't help condoning the theft. He picks up a pebble by the shore and polishes it into a jewel. Occasionally, too, he writes divine lines, and knows more about the grammar of the stage than all the rest of them [the dramatists] put together.

Lester Wallack was at the theatre during the first production of "London Assurance." The managers of Covent Garden had done their utmost to mount the piece according to the latest improvements in stage art. The audience saw before them rare examples of the boxed-in scene, where all the appointments were fitting and realistic. The stage manager was well-nigh stunned when the young dramatist asked him to use a real carpet in one of the settings. Herein may be noted another of Boucicault's claims to influence; more than any other playwright of his day, he depended largely upon realistic accessory for certain effects. He used fire in "The Octoroon" and water in "The Colleen Bawn" — those external elements affording many outlets for thrilling situations. The Boucicault drama was essentially external.

He studied his audiences carefully, noting in what way they responded to his climaxes — for he spent many hours preparing novel surprises.

He wrote many plays in rapid succession. A remarkable fact about his career was that, no matter whether good or bad, original or otherwise, the Boucicault drama was eagerly sought by the theatre because it was framed for the theatre. As fast as the dramatist wrote, just so fast were his manuscripts given to companies for rehearsal. Boucicault himself declared that "he was a lucky bag out of which some managers drew fortunes and some drew blanks."

One usually grows older and wiser with the years. But it is typical of Boucicault that he blossomed all of a sudden, that he slipped, at an early age, into whatever intellectual maturity he was to possess, and that he used over and over again all the tricks and sentiments of an external nature familiar to earlier Victorian drama. He was, as some of his friends termed him, a gay, "semi-fashionable, semi-Bohemian" fellow, impulsive, nervous, a rapid worker, and as ready to flare into a rage as he was to exhibit his abundant Irish wit and humour. No man of his time was more given to excessive use of the blarney stone.

> I knew [him], [writes Clement Scott], in the "Colleen Bawn" days at the Adelphi, when he had a magnificent mansion and grounds at Old Brompton. . . . I knew him in the days of "The Shaughraun" at the same theatre, and I met him constantly at the tables of Edmund Yates [*et als.*], and I was also a frequent guest at his own table when he lived, as he ever did, money or no money, credit or no credit, "en prince" at his flat. . . . Dion was a born "viveur", a "gourmand" and "gourmet", and certainly one of the most brilliant conversationalists it has ever been my happy fortune to meet.

John Coleman, the actor and writer, used to see Boucicault at Charles Reade's, in later years, when the dramatist had become much older, yet with his Irish nature still unchanged. It was characteristic of Boucicault that he could sing "The Wearing of the Green" with as much spirit at sixty as he could at twenty. Coleman says:

> This distinguished actor and author had (so he himself told me) left England under a cloud, but had "cast his nighted colour off" in Amer ca, and returned to triumph. When we first met he was living "en grand seigneur" in the famous mansion at Kensington Gore, which had formerly been the home of the Countess of Blessington. He was then making a fortune one moment and spending it the next. . . .
>
> His accomplishments were many and varied. He knew something about

everything, and what he didn't know about the popular drama (which to some extent he incarnated in himself) wasn't worth knowing. Although no longer young, his mind was alert as a boy's, and I can well believe what Charles Mathews, Walter Lacey, and John Brougham often told me — that in his juvenalia he was the most fascinating young scapegrace that ever baffled or bamboozled a bailiff.

It is not necessary to go into an account of the prolific career of Dion Boucicault. One may find it outlined in the present writer's "Famous Actor Families in America", and in Townsend Walsh's "Life of Boucicault", written for the Dunlap Society.

He was an actor of tremendous versatility, and "created" the chief rôles in many of his own plays. He fell easily into the habit of depending on French sources, and he was likewise one among many dramatists who profited by adapting plays from the novels of Dickens. He often entered the field as a dramatic innovator, and the work he did on the version of "Rip Van Winkle", which Joseph Jefferson later brought to such success, helped to facilitate its stage production. True to his reaching out for any kind of available material, he converted Scott's "The Heart of Midlothian" and Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" into dramas, and collaborated with Charles Reade in preparing "Foul Play" from the novel for stage presentation. All this dramatic activity showed too much facility, and the reader who will examine his essay on the art of dramatic composition will note the philosophy of style which influenced his literary endeavours. During his long career, he often served as a reader of plays for the current theatre, and his approach toward a manuscript is clearly indicated in what he once said respecting the laws of dramaturgy:

> The essence of a rule is its necessity: it must be reasonable and always in the right. The unities of time and place do not seem to be reasonable and have been violated with impunity, therefore are not always in the right. The liberty of imagination should not be sacrificed to arbitrary restrictions and traditions that lead to dulness and formality. Art is not a church; it is the philosophy of pleasure.

The summary of Boucicault's life is a peculiar one; impulsive yet thoughtful, quick to see effects, but lacking in originality, except that originality which had to do with practical arrangement; he was extravagant and headstrong, yet kind of heart. He had a fund of knowledge which his dramatic instinct enslaved for stage use. He was quick to lay hold of the events of the moment and to incorporate them in his dramas. Note "The Relief of Lucknow" and "The Octoroon." He was as closely identified with the development of the drama in America as he was with the development of the Victorian drama in England. As an Irishman, he was interested in the political welfare of his country, and his public utterances, his occasional pamphlets, and the references to Irish condition made in his dramas were many.

Boucicault was rapid in his work, and he always held that this rapidity was due to the fact that the dramatic copyright law did not afford the author proper protection; he had to be quick in order to get ahead of his competitors. It was in 1856 that the American Congress decided the author had some rights to his printed productions. In France, Boucicault had seen dramatists prosper under the royalty system. For years he too fought for the same opportunity, and only succeeded, finally, by openly defying the Dramatic Authors' Society in England and the

dramatic managers of the United States. This he proceeded to do, around 1860, by sending forth more than one company in his own plays, taking a proper commission for himself from the proceeds of each performance. By these travelling companies of his, he was partly instrumental in hastening the decline of the old Stock System. In 1866, he preached his ideas to the French, who greeted them favourably, and, by 1872, the United States had likewise accepted them.

The royalty system was insisted upon by Boucicault after dire experience. Writing in 1879, he said:

> To the commercial manager we owe the introduction of the burlesque, opera-bouffe, and the reign of buffoonery. We owe to him also the deluge of French plays that set in with 1842, and swamped the English drama of that period. For examples: the usual price received by Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer, and Talfourd at the time for their plays was £500. I was a beginner in 1841, and received for my comedy, "London Assurance", £300. For that amount the manager bought the privilege of playing the work for his season. Three years later I offered a new play to a principal London theatre. The manager offered me £100 for it. In reply to my objection to the smallness of the sum, he remarked: "I can go to Paris and select a first-class comedy; having seen it performed, I feel certain of its effect. To get this comedy translated will cost me £25. Why should I give you £300 or £500 for your comedy, the success of which I cannot feel so assured?" The argument was unanswerable, and the result inevitable. I sold a work for £100 that took me six months' hard work to compose, and accepted a commission to translate three French plays at £50 apiece. This work afforded me child's play for a fortnight. Thus the English dramatist was obliged either to relinquish the stage altogether or to become a French copyist.

Boucicault has left his impress upon the development of drama, and his name is one to be reckoned with. Few of his plays, however, bear the permanent elements that will preserve them for the next century. He was original, if by that word one means entertaining; otherwise, he was clever — a cleverness based upon his gift of dialogue, however imitative, and his knowledge of stagecraft. As one critic said:

> He gave his age what it wanted. . . . He was a dramaturgical matador. . . . The Boucicault drama is dead; any discussion of it is in the nature of an autopsy. Its most notable quality was its gayety — its fine animal spirits. It was merry and clean.

Boucicault did much to create for the stage a stereotyped figure of the Irishman. Small wonder it is that his name should spell anathema to the new generation of Irish playwrights. W. B. Yeats claims that the Abbey Theatre was firmly founded on a determination to root out the popular conception of the Irishman, so sentimentally and so ignobly presented in "The Colleen Bawn", "The Shaughraun", and "Arrah-na-Pogue."

"London Assurance" has been selected for inclusion in the present collection, not because it is typical of Boucicault at his maturest, but because it reflects the degradation of English comedy to the needs of a very trivial theatrical atmosphere. It is one of the plays presenting infinite possibilities from the standpoint of acting.

It has the semblance of manners, even as "The School for Scandal" has the essential spirit of manners. *Grace Harkaway* may be trivial, but still she is picturesque. *Lady Gay Spanker*, with none of the deeper qualities of *Lady Algy*, in R. C. Carton's later comedy, "Lord and Lady Algy", possesses vivid and attractive possibilities. Certainly, in the drawing of *Mawley*, Mr. Carton must have had in mind the former picture of *Mr. Spanker*. The play has received no better revival than that given to it by the Bancrofts, in 1877, when it was reshaped so as to make it less old-fashioned. In 1847, Charles Dickens wrote:

> Shall I ever forget Vestris in "London Assurance" [Madame Vestris was the original *Grace Harkaway*] bursting out with certain praises (they always elicited three rounds) — of a country morning, I think it was? The atrocity was perpetrated, I remember, on a lawn before a villa. It was led up to by flower-pots. The thing was as like any honest sympathy, or honest English, as the rose-pink on a sweep's face on May Day is to a beautiful complexion; but Harley (he was the "creator" of *Mark Meddle*) generally appeared touched to the soul, and a man in the pit always cried out, "Beau-ti-ful."

LONDON ASSURANCE

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

By DION L. BOURCICAULT

TO

CHARLES KEMBLE

THIS COMEDY

(WITH HIS KIND PERMISSION)

IS DEDICATED

BY HIS FERVENT ADMIRER AND HUMBLE SERVANT

DION. L. BOURCICAULT

CAST OF CHARACTERS

	Covent Garden, 1841	*Park*, 1841
Sir Harcourt Courtly	Mr. W. Farren	Mr. Placide
Max Harkaway	Mr. Bartley	Mr. Fisher
Charles Courtly	Mr. Anderson	Mr. Wheatley
Mr. Spanker	Mr. Keeley	Mr. Williams
Dazzle	Mr. C. Mathews	Mr. Browne
Mark Meddle	Mr. Harley	Mr. Latham
Cool (Valet)	Mr. Brindal	Mr. Andrews
Simpson (Butler)	Mr. Honner	Mr. King
Martin	Mr. Ayliffe	Mr. Howard
Lady Gay Spanker	Mrs. Nisbett	Miss Cushman
Grace Harkaway	Madame Vestris	Miss Clarendon
Pert	Mrs. Humby	Mrs. Vernon

The Scene lies in London and Gloucestershire in 1841.
Time — Three days.

First produced at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, on March 4, 1841; and in the United States, at the Park Theatre, New York, October 11, 1841.

LONDON ASSURANCE

ACT I

SCENE FIRST. — *An Ante-Room in* SIR HARCOURT COURTLY'S *House in Belgrave Square.*

[*Enter* COOL]

COOL. Half-past nine, and Mr. Charles has not yet returned. I am in a fever of dread. If his father happen to rise earlier than usual on any morning, he is sure to ask first for Mr. Charles. Poor deluded old gentleman — he little thinks how he is deceived.

[*Enter* MARTIN, *lazily*]

Well, Martin, he has not come home yet!

MARTIN. No; and I have not had a wink of sleep all night — I cannot stand this any longer; I shall give warning. This is the fifth night Mr. Courtly has remained out, and I'm obliged to stand at the hall window to watch for him.

COOL. You know, if Sir Harcourt was aware that we connived at his son's irregularities, we should all be discharged.

MARTIN. I have used up all my common excuses on his duns. — "Call again", "Not at home", and "Send it down to you", won't serve any more; and Mr. Crust, the wine merchant, swears he will be paid.

COOL. So they all say. Why, he has arrests out against him already. I've seen the fellows watching the door — [*Loud knock and ring heard*] — There he is, just in time — quick, Martin, for I expect Sir William's bell every moment — [*Bell rings*] — and there it is. [*Exit* MARTIN, *slowly*] Thank heaven! he will return to college to-morrow, and this heavy responsibility will be taken off my shoulders. A valet is as difficult a post to fill properly as that of prime minister. [*Exit*]

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Without*] Hollo!

DAZZLE. [*Without*] Steady!

[*Enter* YOUNG COURTLY *and* DAZZLE]

YOUNG COURTLY. Hollo-o-o!

DAZZLE. Hush! what are you about, howling like a Hottentot. Sit down there, and thank heaven you are in Belgrave Square, instead of Bow Street.

YOUNG COURTLY. D—n — damn Bow Street.

DAZZLE. Oh, with all my heart! — you have not seen as much of it as I have.

YOUNG COURTLY. I say — let me see — what was I going to say? — oh, look here — [*Pulls out a large assortment of bell-pulls, knockers, etc., from his pocket*] There! dam'me! I'll puzzle the two-penny postmen, — I'll deprive them of their right of disturbing the neighbourhood. That black lion's head did belong to old Vampire, the money-lender; this bell-pull to Miss Stitch, the milliner.

DAZZLE. And this brass griffin —

YOUNG COURTLY. That! oh, let me see — I think — I twisted that off our own hall-door as I came in, while you were paying the cab.

DAZZLE. What shall I do with them?

YOUNG COURTLY. Pack 'em in a small hamper, and send 'em to the sitting magistrate with my father's compliments; in the mean time, come into my room, and I'll astonish you with some Burgundy.

[*Re-enter* COOL]

COOL. Mr. Charles —

YOUNG COURTLY. Out! out! not at home to any one.

COOL. And drunk —

YOUNG COURTLY. As a lord.

COOL. If Sir Harcourt knew this, he would go mad, he would discharge me.

YOUNG COURTLY. You flatter yourself: that would be no proof of his insanity. — [*To* DAZZLE] This is Cool,

sir, Mr. Cool; he is the best liar in London — there is a pungency about his invention, and an originality in his equivocation, that is perfectly refreshing.

COOL. [*Aside*] Why, Mr. Charles, where did you pick him up?

YOUNG COURTLY. You mistake, he picked *me* up. [*Bell rings*]

COOL. Here comes Sir Harcourt — pray do not let him see you in this state.

YOUNG COURTLY. State! what do you mean? I am in a beautiful state.

COOL. I should lose my character.

YOUNG COURTLY. That would be a fortunate epoch in your life, Cool.

COOL. Your father would discharge me.

YOUNG COURTLY. Cool, my dad is an old ass.

COOL. Retire to your own room, for heaven's sake, Mr. Charles.

YOUNG COURTLY. I'll do so for my own sake. [*To* DAZZLE] I say, old fellow, [*staggering*] just hold the door steady while I go in.

DAZZLE. This way. Now, then! — take care! [*Helps him into the room*]

[*Enter* SIR HARCOURT COURTLY *in an elegant dressing-gown, and Greek scull-cap and tassels, etc.*]

SIR HARCOURT. Cool, is breakfast ready?

COOL. Quite ready, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Apropos. I omitted to mention that I expect Squire Harkaway to join us this morning, and you must prepare for my departure to Oak Hall immediately.

COOL. Leave town in the middle of the season, Sir Harcourt? So unprecedented a proceeding!

SIR HARCOURT. It is! I confess it: there is but one power could effect such a miracle — that is divinity.

COOL. How!

SIR HARCOURT. In female form, of course. Cool, I am about to present society with a second Lady Courtly; young — blushing eighteen; — lovely! I have her portrait; rich! I have her banker's account; — an heiress, and a Venus!

COOL. Lady Courtly could be none other.

SIR HARCOURT. Ha! ha! Cool, your manners are above your station. — Apropos, I shall find no further use for my brocade dressing-gown.

COOL. I thank you, Sir Harcourt; might I ask who the fortunate lady is?

SIR HARCOURT. Certainly: Miss Grace Harkaway, the niece of my old friend, Max.

COOL. Have you never seen the lady, sir?

SIR HARCOURT. Never — that is, yes — eight years ago. Having been, as you know, on the continent for the last seven years, I have not had the opportunity of paying my devoirs. Our connexion and betrothal was a very extraordinary one. Her father's estates were contiguous to mine; — being a penurious, miserly, *ugly* old scoundrel, he made a market of my indiscretion, and supplied my extravagance with large sums of money on mortgages, his great desire being to unite the two properties. About seven years ago, he died — leaving Grace, a girl, to the guardianship of her uncle, with this will: — if, on attaining the age of nineteen, she would consent to marry me, I should receive those deeds, and all his property, as her dowry. If she refused to comply with this condition, they should revert to my heir-presumptive or apparent. — She consents.

COOL. Who would not?

SIR HARCOURT. I consent to receive her 15,000*l.* a year.

COOL. [*Aside*] Who would not?

SIR HARCOURT. So prepare, Cool, prepare; — but where is my boy, where is Charles?

COOL. Why — oh, he is gone out, Sir Harcourt; yes, gone out to take a walk.

SIR HARCOURT. Poor child! A perfect child in heart — a sober, placid mind — the simplicity and verdure of boyhood, kept fresh and unsullied by any contact with society. Tell me, Cool, at what time was he in bed last night?

COOL. Half-past nine, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Half-past nine! Beautiful! What an original idea! Reposing in cherub slumbers, while all around him teems with drinking and debauchery! Primitive sweetness of nature! No pilot-coated, bear-skinned brawling!

COOL. Oh, Sir Harcourt!

SIR HARCOURT. No cigar-smoking —

COOL. Faints at the smell of one.

SIR HARCOURT. No brandy and water bibbing.

COOL. Doesn't know the taste of anything stronger than barley-water.

SIR HARCOURT. No night parading —

COOL. Never heard the clock strike twelve, except at noon.

SIR HARCOURT. In fact, he is my son, and became a gentleman by right of paternity. He inherited my manners.

[*Enter* MARTIN]

MARTIN. Mr. Harkaway!

[*Enter* MAX HARKAWAY]

MAX. Squire Harkaway, fellow, or Max Harkaway, another time. [MARTIN *bows, and exit*] Ah! Ha! Sir Harcourt, I'm devilish glad to see you! Gi' me your fist. Dang it, but I'm glad to see ye! Let me see: six — seven years, or more, since we have met. How quickly they have flown!

SIR HARCOURT [*throwing off his studied manner*]. Max, Max! Give me your hand, old boy. — [*Aside*] Ah! he *is* glad to see me: there is no fawning pretence about that squeeze. Cool, you may retire. [*Exit* COOL]

MAX. Why, you are looking quite rosy.

SIR HARCOURT. Ah! ah! rosy! Am I too florid?

MAX. Not a bit; not a bit.

SIR HARCOURT. I thought so. — [*Aside*] Cool said I had put too much on.

MAX. How comes it, Courtly, that you manage to retain your youth? See, I'm as grey as an old badger, or a wild rabbit; while you are — are as black as a young rook. I say, whose head grew your hair, eh?

SIR HARCOURT. Permit me to remark that all the beauties of my person are of home manufacture. Why should you be surprised at my youth? I have scarcely thrown off the giddiness of a very boy — elasticity of limb — buoyancy of soul! Remark this position — [*Throws himself into an attitude*] I held that attitude for ten minutes at Lady Acid's last *reunion*, at the express desire of one of our first sculptors, while he was making a sketch of me for the Apollo.

MAX. [*Aside*] Making a butt of thee for their gibes.

SIR HARCOURT. Lady Sarah Sarcasm started up, and, pointing to my face, ejaculated, "Good gracious! Does not Sir Harcourt remind you of the countenance of Ajax, in the Pompeian portrait?"

MAX. Ajax! — humbug.

SIR HARCOURT. You are complimentary.

MAX. I'm a plain man, and always speak my mind. What's in a face or figure? Does a Grecian nose entail a good temper? Does a waspish waist indicate a good heart? Or, do oily perfumed locks necessarily thatch a well-furnished brain?

SIR HARCOURT. It's an undeniable fact, — *plain* people always praise the beauties of the *mind*.

MAX. Excuse the insinuation; I had thought the first Lady Courtly had surfeited you with beauty.

SIR HARCOURT. No; she lived fourteen months with me, and then eloped with an intimate friend. Etiquette compelled me to challenge the seducer; so I received satisfaction — and a bullet in my shoulder at the same time. However, I had the consolation of knowing that he was the handsomest man of the age. She did not insult me, by running away with a d—d ill-looking scoundrel.

MAX. That, certainly, was flattering.

SIR HARCOURT. I felt so, as I pocketed the ten thousand pounds damages.

MAX. That must have been a great balm to your sore honour.

SIR HARCOURT. It was — Max, my honour would have died without it; for on that year the wrong horse won the Derby — by some mistake. It was one of the luckiest chances — a thing that does not happen twice in a man's life — the opportunity of getting rid of his wife and his debts at the same time.

MAX. Tell the truth, Courtly! Did you not feel a little frayed in your delicacy — your honour, now? Eh?

SIR HARCOURT. Not a whit. Why should I? I married *money*, and I received it — virgin gold! My delicacy and honour had nothing to do with hers. The world pities the bereaved husband, when it should congratulate. No: the affair made a sensation, and I was the object. Besides, it is vulgar to make a parade of one's feelings, however acute they may be: impenetrability of countenance is the sure sign of your highly-bred man of fashion.

MAX. So, a man must, therefore, lose his wife and his money with a smile, — in fact, every thing he possesses but his temper.

SIR HARCOURT. Exactly, — and greet ruin with *vive la bagatelle!* For example, — your modish beauty never

discomposes the shape of her features with convulsive laughter. A smile rewards the *bon mot*, and also shows the whiteness of her teeth. She never weeps impromptu — tears might destroy the economy of her cheek. Scenes are vulgar, — hysterics obsolete; she exhibits a calm, placid, impenetrable lake, whose surface is reflexion, but of unfathomable depth, — a statue, whose life is hypothetical, and not a *prima facie* fact.

MAX. Well, give me the girl that will fly at your eyes in an argument, and stick to her point like a fox to his own tail.

SIR HARCOURT. But etiquette! Max, — remember etiquette!

MAX. Damn etiquette! I have seen a man who thought it sacrilege to eat fish with a knife, that would not scruple to rise up and rob his brother of his birthright in a gambling-house. Your thorough-bred, well-blooded heart will seldom kick over the traces of good feeling. That's my opinion, and I don't care who knows it.

SIR HARCOURT. Pardon me, — etiquette is the pulse of society, by regulating which the body politic is retained in health. I consider myself one of the faculty in the art.

MAX. Well, well; you are a living libel upon common sense, for you are old enough to know better.

SIR HARCOURT. Old enough! What do you mean? Old! I still retain all my little juvenile indiscretions, which your niece's beauties must teach me to discard. I have not sown my wild oats yet.

MAX. Time you did, at sixty-three.

SIR HARCOURT. Sixty-three! Good God! — forty, 'pon my life! forty, next March.

MAX. Why, you are older than I am.

SIR HARCOURT. Oh! you are old enough to be my father.

MAX. Well, if I am, I am; that's etiquette, I suppose. Poor Grace! how often I have pitied her fate! That a young and beautiful creature should be driven into wretched splendour, or miserable poverty!

SIR HARCOURT. Wretched! wherefore? Lady Courtly wretched! Impossible!

MAX. Will she not be compelled to marry you, whether she likes you or not? — a choice between you and poverty. [*Aside*] And hang me if it isn't a tie! But why do you not introduce your son Charles to me? I have not seen him since he was a child. You would never permit him to accept any of my invitations to spend his vacation at Oak Hall, — of course, we shall have the pleasure of his company now.

SIR HARCOURT. He is not fit to enter society yet. He is a studious, sober boy.

MAX. Boy! Why, he's five-and-twenty.

SIR HARCOURT. Good gracious! Max, — you will permit me to know my own son's age, — he is not twenty.

MAX. I'm dumb.

SIR HARCOURT. You will excuse me while I indulge in the process of dressing. — Cool!

[*Enter* COOL]

Prepare my toilet. [*Exit* COOL] That is a ceremony, which, with me, supersedes all others. I consider it a duty which every gentleman owes to society — to render himself as agreeable an object as possible: and the least compliment a mortal can pay to nature, when she honours him by bestowing extra care in the manufacture of his person, is to display her taste to the best possible advantage; and so, *au revoir*. [*Exit*]

MAX. That's a good soul — he has his faults, and who has not? Forty years of age! Oh, monstrous! — but he does look uncommonly young for sixty, spite of his foreign locks and complexion.

[*Enter* DAZZLE]

DAZZLE. Who's my friend, with the stick and gaiters, I wonder — one of the family — the governor, may be?

MAX. Who's this? Oh, Charles — is that you, my boy? How are you? [*Aside*] This is the *boy*.

DAZZLE. He knows me — he is too respectable for a bailiff. [*Aloud*] How are you?

MAX. Your father has just left me.

DAZZLE. [*Aside*] The devil he has! He has been dead these ten years. Oh! I see, he thinks I'm young Courtly. [*Aloud*] The honour you would confer upon me, I must unwillingly disclaim, — I am not Mr. Courtly.

MAX. I beg your pardon — a friend, I suppose?

DAZZLE. Oh, a most intimate friend — a friend of years — distantly related to the family — one of my ancestors

married one of his. [*Aside*] Adam and Eve.

MAX. Are you on a visit here?

DAZZLE. Yes. Oh! yes. [*Aside*] Rather a short one, I'm afraid.

MAX. [*Aside*] This appears a dashing kind of fellow — as he is a friend of Sir Harcourt's, I'll invite him to the wedding. [*Aloud*] Sir, if you are not otherwise engaged, I shall feel honoured by your company at my house, Oak Hall, Gloucestershire.

DAZZLE. Your name is —

MAX. Harkaway — Max Harkaway.

DAZZLE. Harkaway — let me see — I ought to be related to the Harkaways, somehow.

MAX. A wedding is about to come off — will you take a part on the occasion?

DAZZLE. With pleasure! any part, but that of the husband.

MAX. Have you any previous engagement?

DAZZLE. I was thinking — eh! why, let me see. [*Aside*] Promised to meet my tailor and his account to-morrow; however, I'll postpone that. [*Aloud*] Have you good shooting?

MAX. Shooting! Why, there's no shooting at this time of the year.

DAZZLE. Oh! I'm in no hurry — I can wait till the season, of course. I was only speaking precautionally — you have good shooting?

MAX. The best in the country.

DAZZLE. Make yourself comfortable! — Say no more — I'm your man — wait till you see how I'll murder your preserves.

MAX. Do you hunt?

DAZZLE. Pardon me — but will you repeat that? [*Aside*] Delicious and expensive idea!

MAX. You ride?

DAZZLE Anything! Everything! From a blood to a broomstick. Only catch me a flash of lightning, and let me get on the back of it, and dam'me if I wouldn't astonish the elements.

MAX. Ha! ha!

DAZZLE. I'd put a girdle round about the earth, in very considerably less than forty minutes.

MAX. Ah! ha! We'll show old Fiddlestrings how to spend the day. He imagines that Nature, at the earnest request of Fashion, made summer days long for him to saunter in the Park, and winter nights, that he might have good time to get cleared out at hazard or at whist. Give me the yelping of a pack of hounds, before the shuffling of a pack of cards. What state can match the chase in full cry, each vying with his fellow which shall be most happy? A thousand deaths fly by unheeded in that one hour's life of ecstasy. Time is outrun, and Nature seems to grudge our bliss by making the day so short.

DAZZLE. No, for then rises up the idol of my great adoration.

MAX. Who's that?

DAZZLE. The bottle — that lends a lustre to the soul! — When the world puts on its night-cap, and extinguishes the sun — then comes the bottle! Oh, mighty wine! Don't ask me to apostrophise. Wine and love are the only two indescribable things in nature; but I prefer the wine, because its consequences are not entailed, and are more easily got rid of.

MAX. How so?

DAZZLE. Love ends in matrimony, wine in soda water.

MAX. Well, I can promise you as fine a bottle as ever was cracked.

DAZZLE. Never mind the bottle, give me the wine. Say no more; but, when I arrive, just shake one of my hands, and put the key of the cellar into the other, and, if I don't make myself intimately acquainted with its internal organization — well, I say nothing — time will show.

MAX. I foresee some happy days.

DAZZLE. And I some glorious nights.

MAX. It mustn't be a flying visit.

DAZZLE. I despise the word — I'll stop a month with you.

MAX. Or a year or two.

DAZZLE. I'll live and die with you!

MAX. Ha! ha! Remember Max Harkaway, Oak Hall, Gloucestershire.

DAZZLE. I'll remember — fare ye well. [MAX *is going*] I say, holloa! — Tallyho-o-o-o!

MAX. Yoicks! — Tallyho-o-o-o! [*Exit*]

DAZZLE. There I am — quartered for a couple of years, at the least. The old boy wants somebody to ride his horses, shoot his game, and keep a restraint on the morals of the parish; I'm eligible. What a lucky accident to meet young Courtly last night! Who could have thought it? — Yesterday, I could not make certain of a dinner, except at my own proper peril; to-day, I would flirt with a banquet.

[*Enter* YOUNG COURTLY]

YOUNG COURTLY. What infernal row was that? Why, [*seeing* DAZZLE] are you here still?

DAZZLE. Yes. Ain't you delighted? I'll ring, and send the servant for my luggage.

YOUNG COURTLY. The devil you will! Why, you don't mean to say you seriously intend to take up a permanent residence here? [*He rings the bell*]

DAZZLE. Now, that's a most inhospitable insinuation.

YOUNG COURTLY. Might I ask your name?

DAZZLE. With a deal of pleasure — Richard Dazzle, late of the Unattached Volunteers, vulgarly entitled the Dirty Buffs.

[*Enter* MARTIN]

YOUNG COURTLY. Then, Mr. Richard Dazzle, I have the honour of wishing you a very good morning. Martin, show this gentleman the door.

DAZZLE. If he does, I'll kick Martin out of it. — No offence. [*Exit* MARTIN] Now, sir, permit me to place a dioramic view of your conduct before you. After bringing you safely home this morning — after indulgently waiting, whenever you took a passing fancy to a knocker or bell-pull — after conducting a retreat that would have reflected honour on Napoleon — you would kick me into the street, like a mangy cur; and that's what you call gratitude. Now, to show you how superior I am to petty malice, I give you an unlimited invitation to my house — my country house — to remain as long as you please.

YOUNG COURTLY. Your house!

DAZZLE. Oak Hall, Gloucestershire, — fine old place! — for further particulars see roadbook — that is, it *nominally* belongs to my old friend and relation, Max Harkaway; but I'm privileged. Capital old fellow — say, shall we be honoured?

YOUNG COURTLY. Sir, permit me to hesitate a moment. [*Aside*] Let me see: I go back to college to-morrow, so I shall not be missing; tradesmen begin to dun —

[*Enter* COOL]

I hear thunder; here is shelter ready for me.

COOL. Oh, Mr. Charles, Mr. Solomon Isaacs is in the hall, and swears he will remain till he has arrested you!

YOUNG COURTLY. Does he! — sorry he is so obstinate — take him my compliments, and I will bet him five to one he will not.

DAZZLE. Double or quits, with my kind regards.

COOL. But, sir, he has discovered the house in Curzon Street; he says he is aware the furniture, at least, belongs to you, and he will put a man in immediately.

YOUNG COURTLY. That's awkward — what's to be done?

DAZZLE. Ask him whether he couldn't make it a woman.

YOUNG COURTLY. I must trust that to fate.

DAZZLE. I will give you my acceptance, if it will be of any use to you — it is of none to me.

YOUNG COURTLY. No, sir; but in reply to your most generous and kind invitation, if you be in earnest, I shall feel delighted to accept it.

DAZZLE. Certainly.

YOUNG COURTLY. Then off we go — through the stables — down the Mews, and so slip through my friend's fingers.

DAZZLE. But, stay, you must do the polite; say farewell to him before you part. Damn it, don't cut him!

YOUNG COURTLY. You jest!

DAZZLE. Here, lend me a card. [COURTLY *gives him one*] Now, then, [*Writes*] "Our respects to Mr. Isaacs — sorry to have been prevented from seeing him." — Ha! ha!

YOUNG COURTLY. Ha! ha!

DAZZLE. We'll send him up some game.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*To* COOL] Don't let my father see him.

[*Exeunt* YOUNG COURTLY *and* DAZZLE]

COOL. What's this? — "Mr. Charles Courtly, P.P.C., returns thanks for obliging inquiries." [*Exit*]

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE FIRST. — *The Lawn before Oak Hall, a fine Elizabethan mansion; a Drawing-Room is seen through large French windows at the back. Statues, urns, and garden chairs about the stage.*

[*Enter* PERT *and* JAMES]

PERT. James, Miss Grace desires me to request that you will watch at the avenue, and let her know when the squire's carriage is seen on the London road.

JAMES. I will go to the lodge. [*Exit*]

PERT. How I do long to see what kind of a man Sir Harcourt Courtly is! They say he is sixty; so he must be old, and consequently ugly. If I was Miss Grace, I would rather give up all my fortune and marry the man I liked, than go to church with a stuffed eel-skin. But taste is everything, — she doesn't seem to care whether he is sixty or sixteen; jokes at love; prepares for matrimony as she would for dinner; says it is a necessary evil, and what can't be cured must be endured. Now, I say this is against all nature; and she is either no woman, or a deeper one than I am, if she prefers an old man to a young one. Here she comes! looking as cheerfully as if she was going to marry Mr. Jenks! my Mr. Jenks! whom nobody won't lead to the halter till I have that honour.

[*Enter* GRACE *from the Drawing-Room*]

GRACE. Well, Pert? any signs of the squire yet?

PERT. No, Miss Grace; but James has gone to watch the road.

GRACE. In my uncle's letter, he mentions a Mr. Dazzle, whom he has invited; so you must prepare a room for him. He is some friend of my husband that is to be, and my uncle seems to have taken an extraordinary predilection for him. Apropos! I must not forget to have a bouquet for the dear old man when he arrives.

PERT. The dear old man! Do you mean Sir Harcourt?

GRACE. Law, no! my uncle, of course. [*Plucking flowers*] What do I care for Sir Harcourt Courtly?

PERT. Isn't it odd, Miss, you have never seen your intended, though it has been so long since you were betrothed?

GRACE. Not at all; marriage matters are conducted now-a-days in a most mercantile manner; consequently, a previous acquaintance is by no means indispensable. Besides, my *prescribed* husband has been upon the continent for the benefit of his — property! They say a southern climate is a great restorer of consumptive estates.

PERT. Well, Miss, for my own part, I should like to have a good look at my bargain before I paid for it; 'specially when one's life is the price of the article. But why, ma'am, do you consent to marry in this blind-man's-buff sort of manner? What would you think if he were not quite so old?

GRACE. I should think he was a little younger.

PERT. I should like him all the better.

GRACE. That wouldn't I. A young husband might expect affection and nonsense, which 'twould be deceit in me to render; nor would he permit me to remain with my uncle. — Sir Harcourt takes me with the incumbrances on his estate, and I shall beg to be left among the rest of the live stock.

PERT. Ah, Miss! but some day you might chance to stumble over *the* man, — what could you do then?

GRACE. Do! beg *the* man's pardon, and request *the* man to pick me up again.

PERT. Ah! you were never in love, Miss?

GRACE. I never was, nor will be, till I am tired of myself and common sense. Love is a pleasant scape-goat for a little epidemic madness. I must have been inoculated in my infancy, for the infection passes over poor me in contempt.

[*Enter* JAMES]

JAMES. Two gentlemen, Miss Grace, have just alighted.

GRACE. Very well, James. [*Exit* JAMES] Love is pictured as a boy; in another century they will be wiser, and paint him as a fool, with cap and bells, without a thought above the jingling of his own folly. Now, Pert, remember this as a maxim, — A woman is always in love with one of two things.

PERT. What are they, Miss?

GRACE. A man, or herself — and I know which is the most profitable. [*Exit*]

PERT. I wonder what my Jenks would say, if I was to ask him. Law!

here comes Mr. Meddle, his rival contemporary solicitor, as he calls him, — a nasty, prying, ugly wretch — what brings him here? He comes puffed with some news. [*Retires*]

[*Enter* MEDDLE, *with a newspaper*]

MEDDLE. I have secured the only newspaper in the village — my character, as an attorney-at-law, depended on the monopoly of its information. — I took it up by chance, when this paragraph met my astonished view: [*Reads*] "We understand that the contract of marriage so long in abeyance on account of the lady's minority, is about to be celebrated, at Oak Hall, Gloucestershire, the well-known and magnificent mansion of Maximilian Harkaway, Esq., between Sir Harcourt Courtly, Baronet, of fashionable celebrity, and Miss Grace Harkaway, niece to the said Mr. Harkaway. The preparations are proceeding in the good old English style." Is it possible! I seldom swear, except in a witness box, but, damme, had it been known in the village, my reputation would have been lost; my voice in the parlour of the Red Lion mute, and Jenks, a fellow who calls himself a lawyer, without more capability than a broomstick, and as much impudence as a young barrister after getting a verdict by mistake; why, he would actually have taken the Reverend Mr. Spout by the button, which is now my sole privilege. Ah! here is Mrs. Pert: couldn't have hit upon a better person. I'll cross-examine her — Lady's maid to Miss Grace, — confidential purloiner of second-hand silk — a *nisi prius* of her mistress — Ah! sits on the woolsack in the pantry, and dictates the laws of kitchen etiquette. — Ah! Mrs. Pert, good morning; permit me to say, — and my word as a legal character is not unduly considered — I venture to affirm, that you look a — quite like the — a —

PERT. Law! Mr. Meddle.

MEDDLE. Exactly like the law.

PERT. Ha! indeed; complimentary, I confess; like the law; tedious, prosy, made up of musty paper. You sha'n't have a long suit of me. Good morning. [*Going*]

MEDDLE. Stay, Mrs. Pert; don't calumniate my calling, or dissimulate vulgar prejudices.

PERT. Vulgar! you talk of vulgarity to me! you, whose sole employment is to sneak about like a pig, snouting out the dust-hole of society, and feeding upon the bad ends of vice! you, who live upon the world's iniquity; you miserable specimen of a bad six-and-eightpence!

MEDDLE. But, Mrs. Pert —

PERT. Don't but me, sir; I won't be butted by any such low fellow.

MEDDLE. This is slander; an action will lie.

PERT. Let it lie; lying is your trade. I'll tell you what, Mr. Meddle; if I had my will, I would soon put a check on your prying propensities. I'd treat you as the farmers do the inquisitive hogs.

MEDDLE. How?

PERT. I would ring your nose. [*Exit*]

MEDDLE. Not much information elicited from that witness. Jenks is at the bottom of this. I have very little hesitation in saying, Jenks is a libellous rascal; I heard reports that he was undermining my character here, through Mrs. Pert. Now I'm certain of it. Assault is expensive; but, I certainly will put by a small weekly stipendium, until I can afford to kick Jenks.

DAZZLE. [*Outside*] Come along; this way!

MEDDLE. Ah! whom have we here? Visitors; I'll address them.

[*Enter* DAZZLE]

DAZZLE. Who's this, I wonder; one of the family? I must know him. [*To* MEDDLE] Ah! how are ye?

MEDDLE. Quite well. Just arrived? — ah! — um! — Might I request the honour of knowing whom I address?

DAZZLE. Richard Dazzle, Esquire; and you —

MEDDLE. Mark Meddle, attorney-at-law.

[*Enter* YOUNG COURTLY]

DAZZLE. What detained you?

YOUNG COURTLY. My dear fellow, I have just seen such a woman!

DAZZLE. [*Aside*] Hush! [*Aloud*] Permit me to introduce you to my very old friend, Meddle. He's a capital fellow; know him.

MEDDLE. I feel honoured. Who is your friend?

DAZZLE. Oh, he? What, my friend? Oh! Augustus Hamilton.

YOUNG COURTLY. How d'ye do? [*Looking off*] There she is again!

MEDDLE [*looking off*]. Why, that is Miss Grace.

DAZZLE. Of course, Grace.

YOUNG COURTLY. I'll go and introduce myself. [DAZZLE *stops him*]

DAZZLE. [*Aside*] What are you about? would you insult my old friend, Puddle, by running away? [*Aloud*] I say, Puddle, just show my friend the lions, while I say how d'ye do to my young friend, Grace. [*Aside*] Cultivate his acquaintance.

[*Exit.* — YOUNG COURTLY *looks after him.*]

MEDDLE. Mr. Hamilton, might I take the liberty?

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Looking off*] Confound the fellow!

MEDDLE. Sir, what did you remark?

YOUNG COURTLY. She's gone! Oh, are you here still, Mr. Thingomerry Puddle?

MEDDLE. Meddle, sir, Meddle, in the list of attorneys.

YOUNG COURTLY. Well, Muddle, or Puddle, or whoever you are, you are a bore.

MEDDLE. [*Aside*] How excessively odd! Mrs. Pert said I was a pig; now I'm a boar! I wonder what they'll make of me next.

YOUNG COURTLY. Mr. Thingamy, will you take a word of advice?

MEDDLE. Feel honoured.

YOUNG COURTLY. Get out.

MEDDLE. Do you mean to — I don't understand.

YOUNG COURTLY. Delighted to quicken your apprehension. You are an ass, Puddle.

MEDDLE. Ha! ha! another quadruped! Yes; beautiful — [*Aside*] I wish he'd call me something libellous: but that would be too much to expect. — [*Aloud*] Anything else?

YOUNG COURTLY. Some miserable, pettifogging scoundrel!

MEDDLE. Good! ha! ha!

YOUNG COURTLY. What do you mean by laughing at me?

MEDDLE. Ha! ha! ha! excellent! delicious!

YOUNG COURTLY. Mr. —— are you ambitious of a kicking?

MEDDLE. Very, very — Go on — kick — go on.

YOUNG COURTLY [*looking off*]. Here she comes! I'll speak to her.

. MEDDLE. But, sir — sir —

YOUNG COURTLY. Oh, go to the devil! [*He runs off*]

MEDDLE. There, there's a chance lost — gone! I have no hesitation in saying that, in another minute, I should have been kicked; literally kicked — a legal luxury. Costs, damages, and actions rose up like sky-rockets in my aspiring soul, with golden tails reaching to the infinity of my hopes. [*Looking*] They are coming this way; Mr. Hamilton in close conversation with Lady Courtly that is to be. Crim. Con. — Courtly versus Hamilton — damages problematical — Meddle, chief witness for plaintiff — guinea a day — professional man! I'll take down their conversation verbatim.

[*He retires behind a bush*]

[*Enter* GRACE, *followed by* YOUNG COURTLY]

GRACE. Perhaps you would follow your friend into the dining-room; refreshment after your long journey must be requisite.

YOUNG COURTLY. Pardon me, madam; but the lovely garden and the loveliness before me is better refreshment than I could procure in any dining-room.

GRACE. Ha! Your company and compliments arrive together.

YOUNG COURTLY. I trust that a passing remark will not spoil so welcome an introduction as this by offending you.

GRACE. I am not certain that anything you could say would offend me.

YOUNG COURTLY. I never meant —

GRACE. I thought not. In turn, pardon me, when I request you will commence your visit with this piece of information: — I consider compliments impertinent, and sweetmeat language fulsome.

YOUNG COURTLY. I would condemn my tongue to a Pythagorean silence if I thought it could attempt to flatter.

GRACE. It strikes me, sir, that you are a stray bee from the hive of fashion; if so, reserve your honey for its proper cell. A truce to compliments. — You have just arrived *from town*, I apprehend.

YOUNG COURTLY. This moment I left mighty London, under the fever of a full season, groaning with the noisy pulse of wealth and the giddy whirling brain of fashion. Enchanting, busy London! how have I prevailed on myself to desert you! Next week the new ballet comes out, — the week after comes Ascot. — Oh!

GRACE. How agonizing must be the reflection.

Young Courtly. Torture! Can you inform me how you manage to avoid suicide here? If there was but an opera, even, within twenty miles! We couldn't get up a rustic ballet among the village girls? No? — ah!

Grace. I am afraid you would find that difficult. How I contrive to support life I don't know — it is wonderful — but I have not precisely contemplated suicide yet, nor do I miss the opera.

Young Courtly. How can you manage to kill time?

Grace. I can't. Men talk of killing time, while time quietly kills them. I have many employments — this week I devote to study and various amusements — next week to being married — the following week to repentance, perhaps.

Young Courtly. Married!

Grace. You seem surprised; I believe it is of frequent occurrence in the metropolis. — Is it not?

Young Courtly. Might I ask to whom?

Grace. A gentleman who has been strongly recommended to me for the situation of husband.

Young Courtly. What an extraordinary match! Would you not consider it advisable to see him, previous to incurring the consequences of such an act?

Grace. You must be aware that fashion says otherwise. The gentleman swears eternal devotion to the lady's fortune, and the lady swears she will outvie him still. My lord's horses and my lady's diamonds shine through a few seasons, until a seat in Parliament, or the continent, stares them in the face; then, when thrown upon each other for resources of comfort, they begin to quarrel about the original conditions of the sale.

Young Courtly. Sale! No! that would be degrading civilization into Turkish barbarity.

Grace. Worse, sir, a great deal worse; for there at least they do not attempt concealment of the barter; but here, every London ball-room is a marriage mart — young ladies are trotted out, while the mother, father, or chaperone plays auctioneer, and knocks them down to the highest bidder — young men are ticketed up with their fortunes on their backs, — and Love, turned into a dapper shopman, descants on the excellent qualities of the material.

Young Courtly. Oh! that such a custom could have ever emanated from the healthy soil of an English heart!

Grace. No. It never did — like most of our literary dandyisms and dandy literature, it was borrowed from the French.

Young Courtly. You seem to laugh at love.

Grace. Love! why, the very word is a breathing satire upon man's reason — a mania, indigenous to humanity — nature's jester, who plays off tricks upon the world, and trips up common sense. When I'm in love, I'll write an almanac, for very lack of wit — prognosticate the sighing season — when to beware of tears — about this time, expect matrimony to be prevalent! Ha! ha! Why should I lay out my life in love's bonds upon the bare security of a man's word?

[*Enter* James]

James. The Squire, madam, has just arrived, and another gentleman with him.

Grace. [*Aside*] My intended, I suppose. [*Exit* James]

Young Courtly. I perceive you are one of the railers against what is termed the follies of high life.

Grace. No, not particularly; I deprecate all folly. By what prerogative can the west-end mint issue absurdity, which, if coined in the east, would be voted vulgar?

Young Courtly. By a sovereign right — because it has Fashion's head upon its side, and that stamps it current.

Grace. Poor Fashion, for how many sins hast thou to answer! The gambler pawns his birth-right for fashion — the *roué* steals his friend's wife for fashion — each abandons himself to the storm of impulse, calling it the breeze of fashion.

Young Courtly. Is this idol of the world so radically vicious?

Grace. No; the root is well enough, as the body was, until it had outgrown its native soil; but now, like a mighty giant lying over Europe, it pillows its head in Italy, its heart in France, leaving the heels alone its sole support for England.

Young Courtly. Pardon me, madam, you wrong yourself to rail against your own inheritance — the kingdom to which loveliness and wit attest your title.

Grace. A mighty realm, forsooth, — with milliners for ministers, a cabinet of coxcombs, envy for my homage, ruin

for my revenue — my right of rule depending on the shape of a bonnet or the sit of a pelisse, with the next grand noodle as my heir-apparent. Mr. Hamilton, when I am crowned, I shall feel happy to abdicate in your favour.

[*Curtseys and exit*]

YOUNG COURTLY. What did she mean by that? Hang me if I can understand her — she is evidently not used to society. Ha! — takes every word I say for infallible truth — requires the solution of a compliment, as if it were a problem in Euclid. She said she was about to marry, but I rather imagine she was in jest. 'Pon my life, I feel very queer at the contemplation of such an idea — I'll follow her. [MEDDLE *comes down*] Oh! perhaps this booby can inform me something about her. [MEDDLE *makes signs at him*] What the devil is he at!

MEDDLE. It won't do — no — ah! um — it's not to be done.

YOUNG COURTLY. What do you mean?

MEDDLE [*points after* GRACE]. Counsel retained — cause to come off!

YOUNG COURTLY. Cause to come off!

MEDDLE. Miss Grace is about to be married.

YOUNG COURTLY. Is it possible?

MEDDLE. Certainly. If *I* have the drawing out of the deeds —

YOUNG COURTLY. To whom?

MEDDLE. Ha! hem! Oh, yes! I dare say — Information being scarce in the market, I hope to make mine valuable.

YOUNG COURTLY. Married! married!

MEDDLE. Now I shall have another chance.

YOUNG COURTLY. I'll run and ascertain the truth of this from Dazzle.

[*Exit*]

MEDDLE. It's of no use: he either dare not kick me, or he can't afford it — in either case, he is beneath my notice. Ah! who comes here? — can it be Sir Harcourt Courtly himself? It can be no other.

[*Enter* COOL]

Sir, I have the honour to bid you welcome to Oak Hall and the village of Oldborough.

COOL. [*Aside*] Excessively polite. [*Aloud*] — Sir, thank you.

MEDDLE. The township contains two thousand inhabitants.

COOL. Does it! I am delighted to hear it.

MEDDLE. [*Aside*] I can charge him for that — ahem — six and eightpence is not much — but it is a beginning. [*Aloud*] If you will permit me, I can inform you of the different commodities for which it is famous.

COOL. Much obliged — but here comes Sir Harcourt Courtly, my master, and Mr. Harkaway — any other time I shall feel delighted.

MEDDLE. Oh! [*Aside*] Mistook the man for the master. [*He retires up*]

[*Enter* MAX *and* SIR HARCOURT]

MAX. Here we are at last. Now give ye welcome to Oak Hall, Sir Harcourt, heartily!

SIR HARCOURT [*languidly*]. Cool, assist me.

[COOL *takes off his furred cloak and gloves; gives him white gloves and a handkerchief*]

MAX. Why, you require unpacking as carefully as my best bin of port. Well, now you are decanted, tell me what did you think of my park as we came along.

SIR HARCOURT. That it would never come to an end. You said it was only a stone's throw from your infernal lodge to the house; why, it's ten miles, at least.

MAX. I'll do it in ten minutes any day.

SIR HARCOURT. Yes, in a steam carriage. Cool, perfume my handkerchief.

MAX. Don't do it. Don't! perfume in the country! why, it's high treason in the very face of Nature; 'tis introducing the robbed to the robber. Here are the sweets from which your fulsome essences are pilfered, and libelled with their names; — don't insult them, too.

SIR HARCOURT. [*To* MEDDLE] Oh! cull me a bouquet, my man!

MAX [*turning*]. Ah, Meddle! how are you? This is Lawyer Meddle.

SIR HARCOURT. Oh! I took him for one of your people.

MEDDLE. Ah! naturally — um — Sir Harcourt Courtly, I have the honour to congratulate — happy occasion approaches. Ahem! I have no hesitation in saying this *very* happy occasion approaches.

SIR HARCOURT. Cool, is the conversation addressed towards me?

COOL. I believe so, Sir Harcourt.

MEDDLE. Oh, certainly! I was complimenting you.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, you are very good; the honour is undeserved; but I am only in the habit of receiving compliments from the fair sex. Men's admiration is so damnably insipid.

MEDDLE. I had hoped to make a unit on that occasion.

SIR HARCOURT. Yes, and you hoped to put an infernal number of cyphers after your unit on that and any other occasion.

MEDDLE. Ha! ha! very good. Why, I did hope to have the honour of drawing out the deeds; for, whatever Jenks may say to the contrary, I have no hesitation in saying —

SIR HARCOURT [*putting him aside*]. [*To* MAX] If the future Lady Courtly be visible at so unfashionable an hour as this, I shall beg to be introduced.

MAX. Visible! Ever since six this morning, I'll warrant ye. Two to one she is at dinner.

SIR HARCOURT. Dinner! Is it possible? Lady Courtly dine at half-past one P.M.!

MEDDLE. I rather prefer that hour to peck a little my —

SIR HARCOURT. Dear me! who was addressing you?

MEDDLE. Oh! I beg pardon.

MAX. Here, James! [*Calling*]

[*Enter* JAMES]

Tell Miss Grace to come here directly. [*Exit* JAMES] Now prepare, Courtly, for, though I say it, she *is* — with the exception of my bay mare, Kitty — the handsomest thing in the country. Considering she is a biped, she is a wonder! Full of blood, sound wind and limb, plenty of bone, sweet coat, in fine condition, with a thorough-bred step, as dainty as a pet greyhound.

SIR HARCOURT. Damme, don't compare her to a horse!

MAX. Well, I wouldn't, but she's almost as fine a creature, — close similarities.

MEDDLE. Oh, very fine creature! Close similarity, amounting to identity.

SIR HARCOURT. Good gracious, sir! What can a lawyer know about women!

MEDDLE. Everything. The consistorial court is fine study of the character, and I have no hesitation in saying that I have examined more women than Jenks, or —

SIR HARCOURT. Oh, damn Jenks!

MEDDLE. Sir, thank you. Damn him again, sir, damn him again!

[*Enter* GRACE]

GRACE. My dear uncle!

MAX. Ah, Grace, you little jade, come here.

SIR HARCOURT [*eyeing her through his glass*]. Oh, dear! she is a rural Venus! I'm astonished and delighted.

MAX. Won't you kiss your old uncle? [*He kisses her*]

SIR HARCOURT [*draws an agonizing face*]. Oh! — ah — um! — *N'importe!* — my privilege in embryo — hem! It's very tantalizing, though.

MAX. You are not glad to see me, you are not. [*Kissing her*]

SIR HARCOURT. Oh; no, no! [*Aside*] that is too much. I shall do something horrible presently, if this goes on. [*Aloud*] I should be sorry to curtail any little ebullition of affection; but — ahem! May I be permitted?

MAX. Of course you may. There, Grace, is Sir Harcourt, your husband that will be. Go to him, girl.

SIR HARCOURT. Permit me to do homage to the charms, the presence of which have placed me in sight of Paradise.

[SIR HARCOURT *and* GRACE *retire*]

[*Enter* DAZZLE]

DAZZLE. Ah! old fellow, how are you?

MAX. I'm glad to see you! Are you comfortably quartered, yet, eh?

DAZZLE. Splendidly quartered! What a place you've got here! Here, Hamilton.

[*Enter* YOUNG COURTLY]

Permit me to introduce my friend, Augustus Hamilton. Capital fellow! drinks like a sieve, and rides like a thunder-storm.

MAX. Sir, I'm devilish glad to see you. Here, Sir Harcourt, permit me to introduce to you —

YOUNG COURTLY. The devil!

DAZZLE. [*Aside*] What's the matter?

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Why, that is my governor, by Jupiter!

DAZZLE. [*Aside*] What, old Whiskers? you don't say that!

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] It is: what's to be done now?

MAX. Mr. Hamilton, Sir Harcourt Courtly — Sir Harcourt Courtly, Mr. Hamilton.

SIR HARCOURT. Hamilton! Good gracious! God bless me! — why, Charles, is it possible? — why, Max, that's my son!

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] What shall I do!

MAX. Your son!

GRACE. Your son, Sir Harcourt! have you a son as old as that gentleman!

SIR HARCOURT. No — that is — a — yes, — not by twenty years — a — Charles, why don't you answer me, sir?

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside to* DAZZLE] What shall I say?

DAZZLE. [*Aside*] Deny your identity.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Capital! [*Aloud*] What's the matter, sir?

SIR HARCOURT. How came you down here, sir?

YOUNG COURTLY. By one of Newman's — best fours — in twelve hours and a quarter.

SIR HARCOURT. Isn't your name Charles Courtly?

YOUNG COURTLY. Not to my knowledge.

SIR HARCOURT. Do you mean to say that you are usually called Augustus Hamilton?

YOUNG COURTLY. Lamentable fact — and quite correct.

SIR HARCOURT. Cool, is that my son?

COOL. No, sir — it is not Mr. Charles — but is very like him.

MAX. I cannot understand all this.

GRACE. [*Aside*] I think I can.

DAZZLE. [*Aside to* YOUNG COURTLY] Give him a touch of the indignant.

YOUNG COURTLY. Allow me to say, Sir What-d'ye-call-'em Hartly —

SIR HARCOURT. Hartly, sir! Courtly, sir! Courtly!

YOUNG COURTLY. Well, Hartly, or Court-heart, or whatever your name may be, I say your conduct is — a — a —, and were it not for the presence of this lady, I should feel inclined — to — to —

SIR HARCOURT. No, no, that can't be my son, — he never would address me in that way.

MAX [*coming down*]. What is all this?

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, your likeness to my son Charles is so astonishing, that it, for a moment — the equilibrium of my etiquette — 'pon my life, I — permit me to request your pardon.

MEDDLE. [*To* SIR HARCOURT] Sir Harcourt, don't apologize, don't — bring an action. I'm witness.

SIR HARCOURT. Some one take this man away.

[*Enter* JAMES]

JAMES. Luncheon is on the table, sir.

SIR HARCOURT. Miss Harkaway, I never swore before a lady in my life — except when I promised to love and cherish the late Lady Courtly, which I took care to preface with an apology, — I was compelled to the ceremony, and consequently not answerable for the language — but to that gentleman's identity I would have pledged — my hair.

GRACE. [*Aside*] If that security were called for, I suspect the answer would be — no effects.

[*Exeunt* SIR HARCOURT *and* GRACE]

MEDDLE. [*To* MAX] I have something very particular to communicate.

MAX. Can't listen at present. [*Exit*]

MEDDLE. [*To* DAZZLE *and* YOUNG COURTLY] I can afford you information, which I —

DAZZLE. Oh, don't bother!

YOUNG COURTLY. Go to the devil! [*Exeunt*]

MEDDLE. Now, I have no hesitation in saying that is the height of ingratitude. — Oh — Mr. Cool — can you oblige me? [*Presents his account*]

COOL. Why, what is all this?

MEDDLE. Small account *versus* you — to giving information concerning the last census of the population of Oldborough and vicinity, six and eightpence.

COOL. Oh, you mean to make me pay for this, do you?

MEDDLE. Unconditionally.

COOL. Well, I have no objection — the charge is fair — but remember, I am a servant on board wages, — will you throw in a little advice gratis — if I give you the money?

MEDDLE. Ahem! — I will.

COOL. A fellow has insulted me. I want to abuse him — what terms are actionable?

MEDDLE. You may call him anything you please, providing there are no witnesses.

COOL. Oh, may I? [*Looks round*] — then you rascally, pettifogging scoundrel!

MEDDLE. Hallo!

COOL. You mean — dirty — disgrace to your profession.

MEDDLE. Libel — slander —

COOL. Aye, but where are your witnesses?

MEDDLE. Give me the costs — six and eighteen pence.

COOL. I deny that you gave me information at all.

MEDDLE. You do!

COOL. Yes, where are your witnesses? [*Exit*]

MEDDLE. Ah — damme! [*Exit*]

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE FIRST. — *A Morning-Room in Oak Hall, French windows opening to the Lawn.*

[MAX *and* SIR HARCOURT *seated on one side,* DAZZLE *on the other;* GRACE *and* YOUNG COURTLY *are playing chess at back. All dressed for dinner*]

MAX. [*Aside to* SIR HARCOURT] What can I do?

SIR HARCOURT. Get rid of them civilly.

MAX. What, turn them out, after I particularly invited them to stay a month or two?

SIR HARCOURT. Why, they are disreputable characters; as for that young fellow, in whom my Lady Courtly appears so particularly absorbed, — I am bewildered — I have written to town for my Charles, my boy — it certainly is the most extraordinary likeness —

DAZZLE. Sir Harcourt, I have an idea —

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, I am delighted to hear it. — [*Aside*] That fellow is a swindler.

MAX. I met him at your house.

SIR HARCOURT. Never saw him before in all my life.

DAZZLE [*crossing to* SIR HARCOURT]. I will bet you five to one that I can beat you three out of four games at billiards, with one hand.

SIR HARCOURT. No, sir.

DAZZLE. I don't mind giving you ten points in fifty.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, I never gamble.

DAZZLE. You don't! Well, I'll teach you — easiest thing in life — you have every requisite — good temper.

SIR HARCOURT. I have not, sir.

DAZZLE. A long-headed, knowing old buck.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir!

[*They go up conversing with* MAX]

GRACE. Really, Mr. Hamilton, you improve. — A young man pays us a visit, as you half intimate, to escape inconvenient friends — that is complimentary to us, his hosts.

YOUNG COURTLY. Nay, that is too severe.

GRACE. After an acquaintanceship of two days, you sit down to teach me chess, and domestic economy at the same time. — Might I ask where you graduated in that science — where you learned all that store of matrimonial advice which you have obliged me with?

YOUNG COURTLY. I imbibed it, madam, from the moment I beheld you, and having studied my subject *con amore*, took my degrees from your eyes.

GRACE. Oh, I see you are a Master of Arts already.

YOUNG COURTLY. Unfortunately, no — I shall remain a bachelor — till you can assist me to that honour. [SIR HARCOURT *comes down — aside to* DAZZLE] Keep the old boy away.

DAZZLE. [*Aside*] How do you get on?

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Splendidly!

SIR HARCOURT. Is the conversation strictly confidential? — or might I join?

DAZZLE [*taking his arm*]. Oh, not in the least, my dear sir — we were remarking that rifle shooting was an excellent diversion during the summer months.

SIR HARCOURT [*drawing himself up*]. Sir, I was addressing —

DAZZLE. And I was saying what a pity it was I couldn't find any one reasonable enough to back his opinion with long odds — come out on the lawn, and pitch up your hat, and I will hold you ten to one I put a bullet into it every time, at forty paces.

SIR HARCOURT. No, sir — I consider you —

MAX. Here, all of you — look, here is Lady Gay Spanker coming across the lawn at a hand gallop!

SIR HARCOURT [*running to the window*]. Bless me, the horse is running away!

MAX. Look how she takes that fence! there's a seat.

SIR HARCOURT. Lady Gay Spanker — who may she be?

GRACE. Gay Spanker, Sir Harcourt? My cousin and dearest friend — you *must* like her.

SIR HARCOURT. It will be my devoir, since it is your wish — though it will be a hard task in your presence.

GRACE. I am sure she will like you.

SIR HARCOURT. Ha! ha! I flatter myself.

YOUNG COURTLY. Who, and what is she?

GRACE. Glee, glee made a living thing — Nature, in some frolic mood, shut up a merry devil in her eye, and, spiting Art, stole joy's brightest harmony to thrill her laugh, which peals out sorrow's knell. Her cry rings loudest in the field — the very echo loves it best, and, as each hill attempts to ape her voice, earth seems to laugh that it made a thing so glad.

MAX. Ay, the merriest minx I ever kissed. [LADY GAY *laughs without*]

LADY GAY. [*Without*] Max!

MAX. Come in, you mischievous puss.

[*Enter* JAMES]

JAMES. Mr. Adolphus and Lady Gay Spanker.

[*Enter* LADY GAY, *fully equipped in riding habit, etc.*]

LADY GAY. Ha! ha! Well, Governor, how are ye? I have been down five times, climbing up your stairs in my long clothes. How are you, Grace, dear? [*Kisses her*] There, don't fidget, Max. And there — [*Kisses him*] there's one for you.

SIR HARCOURT. Ahem!

LADY GAY. Oh, gracious, I didn't see you had visitors.

MAX. Permit me to introduce — Sir Harcourt Courtly, Lady Gay Spanker. Mr. Dazzle, Mr. Hamilton — Lady Gay Spanker.

SIR HARCOURT. [*Aside*] A devilish fine woman!

DAZZLE. [*Aside to* SIR HARCOURT] She's a devilish fine woman.

LADY GAY. You mustn't think anything of the liberties I take with my old papa here — bless him!

SIR HARCOURT. Oh, no! [*Aside*] I only thought I should like to be in his place.

LADY GAY. I am so glad you have come, Sir Harcourt. Now we shall be able to make a decent figure at the heels of a hunt.

SIR HARCOURT. Does your ladyship hunt?

LADY GAY. Ha! I say, Governor, does my ladyship hunt? I rather flatter myself that I do hunt! Why, Sir Harcourt, one might as well live without laughing as without hunting. Man was fashioned expressly to fit a horse. Are not hedges and ditches created for leaps? Of course! And I look upon foxes to be one of the most blessed dispensations of a benign Providence.

SIR HARCOURT. Yes, it is all very well in the abstract: I tried it once.

LADY GAY. Once! Only once?

SIR HARCOURT. Once, only once. And then the animal ran away with me.

LADY GAY. Why, you would not have him walk?

SIR HARCOURT. Finding my society disagreeable, he instituted a series of kicks, with a view to removing the annoyance; but aided by the united stays of the mane and tail, I frustrated his intentions. His next resource, however, was more effectual, for he succeeded in rubbing me off against a tree.

MAX AND LADY GAY. Ha! ha! ha!

DAZZLE. How absurd you must have looked with your legs and arms in the air, like a shipwrecked tea-table.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, I never looked absurd in my life. Ah, it may be very amusing in relation, I dare say, but very unpleasant in effect.

LADY GAY. I pity you, Sir Harcourt; it was criminal in your parents to neglect your education so shamefully.

SIR HARCOURT. Possibly; but be assured I shall never break my neck awkwardly from a horse, when it might be accomplished with less trouble from a bed-room window.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] My dad will be caught by this she-Bucephalus tamer.

MAX. Ah! Sir Harcourt, had you been here a month ago, you would have witnessed the most glorious run that ever swept over merry England's green cheek — a steeple-chase, sir, which I intended to win, but my horse broke down the day before. I had a chance, notwithstanding, and but for Gay here, I should have won. How I regretted my absence from it! How did my filly behave herself, Gay?

Lady Gay. Gloriously, Max! gloriously! There were sixty horses in the field, all mettle to the bone: the start was a picture — away we went in a cloud — pell-mell — helter-skelter — the fools first, as usual, using themselves up — we soon passed them — first your Kitty, then my Blueskin, and Craven's colt last. Then came the tug — Kitty skimmed the walls — Blueskin flew over the fences — the Colt neck and neck, and half a mile to run — at last the Colt baulked a leap and went wild. Kitty and I had it all to ourselves — she was three lengths ahead as we breasted the last wall, six feet, if an inch, and a ditch on the other side. Now, for the first time, I gave Blueskin his head — ha! ha! — Away he flew like a thunderbolt — over went the filly — I over the same spot, leaving Kitty in the ditch — walked the steeple, eight miles in thirty minutes, and scarcely turned a hair.

All. Bravo! Bravo!

Lady Gay. Do you hunt?

Dazzle. Hunt! I belong to a hunting family. I was born on horseback and cradled in a kennel! Aye, and I hope I may die with a whoo-whoop!

Max. [*To* Sir Harcourt] You must leave your town habits in the smoke of London: here we rise with the lark.

Sir Harcourt. Haven't the remotest conception when that period is.

Grace. The man that misses sunrise loses the sweetest part of his existence.

Sir Harcourt. Oh, pardon me; I have seen sunrise frequently after a ball, or from the windows of my travelling carriage, and I always considered it disagreeable.

Grace. I love to watch the first tear that glistens in the opening eye of morning, the silent song the flowers breathe, the thrilling choir of the woodland minstrels, to which the modest brook trickles applause: — these swelling out the sweetest chord of sweet creation's matins, seem to pour some soft and merry tale into the daylight's ear, as if the waking world had dreamed a happy thing, and now smiled o'er the telling of it.

Sir Harcourt. The effect of a rustic education! Who could ever discover music in a damp foggy morning, except those confounded waits, who never play in tune, and a miserable wretch who makes a point of crying coffee under my window just as I am persuading myself to sleep; in fact, I never heard any music worth listening to, except in Italy.

Lady Gay. No? then you never heard a well-trained English pack, full cry?

Sir Harcourt. Full cry!

Lady Gay. Aye! there is harmony, if you will. Give me the trumpet-neigh; the spotted pack just catching scent. What a chorus is their yelp! The view-hallo, blent with a peal of free and fearless mirth! That's our old English music, — match it where you can.

Sir Harcourt. [*Aside*] I must see about Lady Gay Spanker.

Dazzle. [*Aside to* Sir Harcourt] Ah, would you —

Lady Gay. Time then appears as young as love, and plumes as swift a wing. Away we go! The earth flies back to aid our course! Horse, man, hound, earth, heaven! — all — all — one piece of glowing ecstasy! Then I love the world, myself, and every living thing, — my jocund soul cries out for very glee, as it could wish that all creation had but one mouth that I might kiss it!

Sir Harcourt. [*Aside*] I wish I were the mouth!

Max. Why, we will regenerate you, Baronet! But Gay, where is your husband? — Where is Adolphus!

Lady Gay. Bless me, where is my Dolly?

Sir Harcourt. You are married, then?

Lady Gay. I have a husband somewhere, though I can't find him just now. Dolly, dear! [*Aside to* Max] Governor, at home I always whistle when I want him.

[*Enter* Spanker]

Spanker. Here I am, — did you call me, Gay?

Sir Harcourt [*eyeing him*]. Is that your husband?

Lady Gay. [*Aside*] Yes, bless his stupid face, that's my Dolly.

Max. Permit me to introduce you to Sir Harcourt Courtly.

Spanker. How d'ye do? I — ah! — um! [*Appears frightened*]

Lady Gay. Delighted to have the honour of making the acquaintance of a gentleman so highly celebrated in the world of fashion.

Spanker. Oh, yes, delighted, I'm

sure — quite — very, so delighted — delighted!

[*Gets quite confused, draws on his glove, and tears it*]

LADY GAY. Where have you been, Dolly?

SPANKER. Oh, ah, I was just outside.

MAX. Why did you not come in?

SPANKER. I'm sure I didn't — I don't exactly know, but I thought as — perhaps — I can't remember.

DAZZLE. Shall we have the pleasure of your company to dinner?

SPANKER. I always dine — usually — that is, unless Gay remains.

LADY GAY. Stay dinner, of course; we came on purpose to stop three or four days with you.

GRACE. Will you excuse my absence, Gay?

MAX. What! what! Where are you going? What takes you away?

GRACE. We must postpone the dinner till Gay is dressed.

MAX. Oh, never mind, — stay where you are.

GRACE. No, I must go.

MAX. I say you sha'n't! I will be king in my own house.

GRACE. Do, my dear uncle; — you shall be king, and I'll be your prime minister, — that is, I will rule, and you shall have the honour of taking the consequences. [*Exit*]

LADY GAY. Well said, Grace; have your own way; it is the only thing we women ought to be allowed.

MAX. Come, Gay, dress for dinner.

SIR HARCOURT. Permit me, Lady Gay Spanker.

LADY GAY. With pleasure, — what do you want?

SIR HARCOURT. To escort you.

LADY GAY. Oh, never mind, I can escort myself, thank you, and Dolly too; — come, dear! [*Exit*]

SIR HARCOURT. Au revoir!

SPANKER. Ah, thank you!

[*Exit awkwardly*]

SIR HARCOURT. What an ill-assorted pair!

MAX. Not a bit! She married him for freedom, and she has it; he married her for protection, and he has it.

SIR HARCOURT. How he ever summoned courage to propose to her, I can't guess.

MAX. Bless you, he never did. She proposed to him! She says he would, if he could; but as he couldn't, she did it for him. [*Exeunt, laughing*]

[*Enter* COOL *with a letter*]

COOL. Mr. Charles, I have been watching to find you alone. Sir Harcourt has written to town for you.

YOUNG COURTLY. The devil he has!

COOL. He expects you down tomorrow evening.

DAZZLE. Oh! he'll be punctual. A thought strikes me.

YOUNG COURTLY. Pooh! Confound your thoughts! I can think of nothing but the idea of leaving Grace, at the very moment when I had established the most —

DAZZLE. What if I can prevent her marriage with your Governor?

YOUNG COURTLY. Impossible!

DAZZLE. He's pluming himself for the conquest of Lady Gay Spanker. It will not be difficult to make him believe she accedes to his suit. And if she would but join in the plan —

YOUNG COURTLY. I see it all. And do you think she would?

DAZZLE. I mistake my game if she would not.

COOL. Here comes Sir Harcourt!

DAZZLE. I'll begin with him. Retire, and watch how I'll open the campaign for you.

[YOUNG COURTLY *and* COOL *retire*]

[*Enter* SIR HARCOURT]

SIR HARCOURT. Here is that cursed fellow again.

DAZZLE. Ah, my dear old friend!

SIR HARCOURT. Mr. Dazzle!

DAZZLE. I have a secret of importance to disclose to you. Are you a man of honour? Hush! don't speak; you are. It is with the greatest pain I am compelled to request you, as a gentleman, that you will shun studiously the society of Lady Gay Spanker!

SIR HARCOURT. Good gracious! Wherefore, and by what right do you make such a demand?

DAZZLE. Why, I am distantly related to the Spankers.

SIR HARCOURT. Why, damme, sir, if you don't appear to be related to every family in Great Britain!

DAZZLE. A good many of the nobility claim me as a connexion. But, to return — she is much struck with your address; evidently, she laid herself out for display.

SIR HARCOURT. Ha! you surprise me!

DAZZLE. To entangle you.

SIR HARCOURT. Ha! ha! why, it did appear like it.

DAZZLE. You will spare her for my sake; give her no encouragement; if disgrace come upon my relatives, the Spankers, I should never hold up my head again.

SIR HARCOURT. [*Aside*] I shall achieve an easy conquest, and a glorious. Ha! ha! I never remarked it before; but this is a gentleman.

DAZZLE. May I rely on your generosity?

SIR HARCOURT. Faithfully. [*Shakes his hand*] Sir, I honour and esteem you; but, might I ask, how came you to meet our friend, Max Harkaway, in my house in Belgrave Square?

[*Re-enter* YOUNG COURTLY. *Sits on sofa at back*]

DAZZLE. Certainly. I had an acceptance of your son's for one hundred pounds.

SIR HARCOURT. [*Astonished*] Of my son's? Impossible!

DAZZLE. Ah, sir, fact! he paid a debt for a poor, unfortunate man — fifteen children — half-a-dozen wives — the devil knows what all.

SIR HARCOURT. Simple boy!

DAZZLE. Innocent youth, I have no doubt; when you have the hundred convenient, I shall feel delighted.

SIR HARCOURT. Oh! follow me to my room, and if you have the document, it will be happiness to me to pay it. Poor Charles! good heart!

DAZZLE. Oh, a splendid heart! I dare say. [*Exit* SIR HARCOURT] Come here; write me the bill.

YOUNG COURTLY. What for?

DAZZLE. What for? why, to release the unfortunate man and his family, to be sure, from jail.

YOUNG COURTLY. Who is he?

DAZZLE. Yourself.

YOUNG COURTLY. But I haven't fifteen children!

DAZZLE. Will you take your oath of that?

YOUNG COURTLY. Nor four wives.

DAZZLE. More shame for you, with all that family. Come, don't be obstinate; write and date it back.

YOUNG COURTLY. Ay, but where is the stamp?

DAZZLE. Here they are, of all patterns. [*Pulls out a pocketbook*] I keep them ready drawn in case of necessity, all but the date and acceptance. Now, if you are in an autographic humour, you can try how your signature will look across half a dozen of them; — there — write — exactly — you know the place — across — good — and thank your lucky stars that you have found a friend at last, that gives you money and advice. [*Takes paper and exit*]

YOUNG COURTLY. Things are approaching to a climax; I must appear *in propriâ personâ* — and immediately — but I must first ascertain what are the real sentiments of this riddle of a woman. Does she love me? I flatter myself — By Jove, here she comes — I shall never have such an opportunity again!

[*Enter* GRACE]

GRACE. I wish I had never seen Mr. Hamilton. Why does every object appear robbed of the charm it once presented to me? Why do I shudder at the contemplation of this marriage, which, till now, was to me a subject of indifference? Am I in love? In love! if I am, my past life has been the work of raising up a pedestal to place my own folly on — I — the infidel — the railer!

YOUNG COURTLY. Meditating upon matrimony, madam?

GRACE. [*Aside*] He little thinks he was the subject of my meditations! [*Aloud*] No.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] I must unmask my battery now.

GRACE. [*Aside*] How foolish I am — he will perceive that I tremble — I must appear at ease. [*A pause*]

YOUNG COURTLY. Eh? ah! um!

GRACE. Ah! [*They sink into silence again. Aside*] How very awkward!

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] It is a very difficult subject to begin. [*Aloud*] Madam — ahem — there was — is — I mean — I was about to remark — a — [*Aside*] Hang me if it is not a very slippery subject. I must brush up my faculties; attack her in her own way. [*Aloud*] Sing! oh, muse! [*Aside*]. Why, I have made love before to a hundred women!

GRACE. [*Aside*] I wish I had something to do, for I have nothing to say.

YOUNG COURTLY. Madam — there is — a subject so fraught with fate to my future life, that you must pardon my lack of delicacy, should a too hasty expression mar the fervent courtesy of its intent. To you, I feel aware, I must appear in the light of a comparative stranger.

Grace. [*Aside*] I know what's coming.

Young Courtly. Of you — I know perhaps too much for my own peace.

Grace. [*Aside*] He *is* in love.

Young Courtly. I forget all that befell before I saw your beauteous self; I seem born into another world — my nature changed — the beams of that bright face falling on my soul, have, from its chaos, warmed into life the flowrets of affection, whose maiden odours now float toward the sun, pouring forth on their pure tongue a mite of adoration, midst the voices of a universe. [*Aside*] That's something in her own style.

Grace. Mr. Hamilton!

Young Courtly. You cannot feel surprised —

Grace. I am more than surprised. [*Aside*] I am delighted.

Young Courtly. Do not speak so coldly.

Grace. You have offended me.

Young Courtly. No, madam; no woman, whatever her state, can be offended by the adoration even of the meanest; it is myself whom I have offended and deceived — but still I ask your pardon.

Grace. [*Aside*] Oh! he thinks I am refusing him. [*Aloud*] I am not exactly offended, but —

Young Courtly. Consider my position — a few days — and an insurmountable barrier would have placed you beyond my wildest hopes — you would have been my mother.

Grace. I should have been your mother! [*Aside*] I thought so.

Young Courtly. No — that is, I meant Sir Harcourt Courtly's bride.

Grace. [*With great emphasis*] Never!

Young Courtly. How! never! may I then hope? — you turn away — you would not lacerate me by a refusal?

Grace. [*Aside*] How stupid he is!

Young Courtly. Still silent! I thank you, Miss Grace — I ought to have expected this — fool that I have been — one course alone remains — farewell!

Grace. [*Aside*] Now he's going.

Young Courtly. Farewell forever! [*Sits*] Will you not speak one word? I shall leave this house immediately — I shall not see you again.

Grace. Unhand me, sir, I insist.

Young Courtly. [*Aside*] Oh! what an ass I've been! [*Rushes up to her, and seizes her hand*] Release this hand? Never! never! [*Kissing it*] Never will I quit this hand! it shall be my companion in misery — in solitude — when you are far away.

Grace. Oh! should any one come! [*Drops her handkerchief; he stoops to pick it up*] For heaven's sake do not kneel.

Young Courtly. [*Kneels*] Forever thus prostrate, before my soul's saint, I will lead a pious life of eternal adoration.

Grace. Should we be discovered thus — pray, Mr. Hamilton — pray — pray.

Young Courtly. Pray! I am praying; what more can I do?

Grace. Your conduct is shameful.

Young Courtly. It is. [*Rises*]

Grace. And if I do not scream, it is not for your sake — that — but it might alarm the family.

Young Courtly. It might — it would. Say, am I wholly indifferent to you? I entreat one word — I implore you — do not withdraw your hand — [*She snatches it away — he puts his round her waist*] You smile.

Grace. Leave me, dear Mr. Hamilton!

Young Courtly. Dear! Then I am dear to you; that word once more; say — say you love me!

Grace. Is this fair?

[*He catches her in his arms, and kisses her.*

[*Enter* Lady Gay Spanker]

Lady Gay. Ha! oh!

Grace. Gay! destruction! [*Exit*]

Young Courtly. Fizgig! The devil!

Lady Gay. Don't mind me — pray, don't let me be any interruption!

Young Courtly. I was just —

Lady Gay. Yes, I see you were.

Young Courtly. Oh! madam, how could you mar my bliss, in the very ecstasy of its fulfilment?

Lady Gay. I always like to be in at the death. Never drop your ears; bless you, she is only a little fresh — give her her head, and she will outrun herself.

Young Courtly. Possibly; but what am I to do?

Lady Gay. Keep your seat.

Young Courtly. But in a few days she will take a leap that must throw me — she marries Sir Harcourt Courtly.

LADY GAY. Why, that is awkward, certainly; but you can challenge him, and shoot him.

YOUNG COURTLY. Unfortunately, that is out of the question.

LADY GAY. How so?

YOUNG COURTLY. You will not betray a secret, if I inform you?

LADY GAY. All right — what is it?

YOUNG COURTLY. I am his son.

LADY GAY. What — his son? But he does not know you?

YOUNG COURTLY. No. I met him here, by chance, and faced it out. I never saw him before in my life.

LADY GAY. Beautiful! — I see it all — you're in love with your mother, that should be — your wife, that will be.

YOUNG COURTLY. Now, I think I could distance the old gentleman, if you will but lend us your assistance.

LADY GAY. I will, in anything.

YOUNG COURTLY. You must know, then, that my father, Sir Harcourt, has fallen desperately in love with you.

LADY GAY. With me! — [*Utters a scream of delight*] — That is delicious!

YOUNG COURTLY. Now, if you only could —

LADY GAY. Could! — I will. Ha! ha! I see my cue. I'll cross his scent — I'll draw him after me. Ho! ho! won't I make love to him? Ha!

YOUNG COURTLY. The only objection might be Mr. Spanker, who might —

LADY GAY. No, he mightn't, — he's no objection. Bless him, he's an inestimable little character — you don't know him as well as I do. I dare say — ha! ha! [*Dinner-bell rings*] Here they come to dinner. I'll commence my operations on your Governor immediately. Ha! ha! how I shall enjoy it.

YOUNG COURTLY. Be guarded!

[*Enter* MAX HARKAWAY, SIR HARCOURT, DAZZLE, GRACE, *and* SPANKER]

MAX. Now, gentlemen — Sir Harcourt, do you lead Grace.

LADY GAY. I believe Sir Harcourt is engaged to me. [*Takes his arm*]

MAX. Well, please yourselves.

[*They file out,* MAX *first,* YOUNG COURTLY *and* GRACE, SIR HARCOURT *coquetting with* LADY GAY, *leaving* DAZZLE, *who offers his arm to* SPANKER]

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

SCENE FIRST. — *A handsome Drawing-Room in Oak Hall, chandeliers, tables with books, drawings, etc.* GRACE *and* LADY GAY *discovered.* SERVANT *handing Coffee*]

GRACE. If there be one habit more abominable than another, it is that of the gentlemen sitting over their wine: it is a selfish, unfeeling fashion, and a gross insult to our sex.

LADY GAY. We are turned out just when the fun begins. How happy the poor wretches look at the contemplation of being rid of us.

GRACE. The conventional signal for the ladies to withdraw is anxiously and deliberately waited for.

LADY GAY. Then I begin to wish I were a man.

GRACE. The instant the door is closed upon us, there rises a roar!

LADY GAY. In celebration of their short-lived liberty, my love; rejoicing over their emancipation.

GRACE. I think it very insulting, whatever it may be.

LADY GAY. Ah! my dear, philosophers say that man is the creature of an hour — it is the dinner hour, I suppose.

[*Loud noise. Cries of* "A song, a song"]

GRACE. I am afraid they are getting too pleasant to be agreeable.

LADY GAY. I hope the squire will restrict himself; after his third bottle, he becomes rather voluminous. [*Cries of* "Silence"] Some one is going to sing. [*Jumps up*] Let us hear!

[SPANKER *is heard to sing*]

GRACE. Oh, no, Gay, for heaven's sake!

LADY GAY. Oho! ha! ha! why, that is my Dolly. [*At the conclusion of the verse*] Well, I never heard my Dolly sing before! Happy wretches, how I envy them!

[*Enter* JAMES, *with a note*]

JAMES. Mr. Hamilton has just left the house for London.

GRACE. Impossible! — that is, without seeing — that is —

LADY GAY. Ha! ha!

GRACE. He never — speak, sir!

JAMES. He left, Miss Grace, in a desperate hurry, and this note, I believe, for you. [*Presenting a note on a salver*]

GRACE. For me!

[*She is about to snatch it, but restraining herself, takes it coolly. Exit* JAMES]

[*Reads*] "Your manner during dinner has left me no alternative but instant departure; my absence will release you from the oppression which my society must necessarily inflict on your sensitive mind. It may tend also to smother, though it can never extinguish, that indomitable passion, of which I am the passive victim. Dare I supplicate pardon and oblivion for the past? It is the last request of the self-deceived, but still loving "AUGUSTUS HAMILTON."

[*Puts her hand to her forehead and appears giddy*]

LADY GAY. Hallo, Grace! what's the matter?

GRACE [*recovering herself*]. Nothing — the heat of the room.

LADY GAY. Oh! what excuse does he make? particular unforeseen business, I suppose?

GRACE. Why, yes — a mere formula — a — a — you may put it in the fire. [*She puts it in her bosom*]

LADY GAY. [*Aside*] It is near enough to the fire where it is.

GRACE. I'm glad he's gone.

LADY GAY. So am I.

GRACE. He was a disagreeable, ignorant person.

LADY GAY. Yes; and so vulgar!

GRACE. No, he was not at all vulgar.

LADY GAY. I mean in appearance.

GRACE. Oh! how can you say so; he was very *distingué*.

LADY GAY. Well, I might have been mistaken, but I took him for a forward, intrusive —

GRACE. Good gracious, Gay! he was very retiring — even shy.

LADY GAY. [*Aside*] It's all right. *She* is in love, — blows hot and cold in the same breath.

GRACE. How can you be a competent judge? Why, you have not known him more than a few hours, — while I — I —

LADY GAY. Have known him two days and a quarter! I yield — I confess, I never was, or will be so intimate with him as you appeared to be! Ha! ha!

[*Loud noise of argument. The folding-doors are thrown open*]

[*Enter the whole party of gentlemen apparently engaged in warm discussion. They assemble in knots, while the* SERVANTS *hand Coffee, etc.*, MAX, SIR HARCOURT, DAZZLE, *and* SPANKER, *together*]

DAZZLE. But, my dear sir, consider the position of the two countries under such a constitution.

SIR HARCOURT. The two countries! What have they to do with the subject?

MAX. Everything. Look at their two legislative bodies.

SPANKER. Ay, look at their two legislative bodies.

SIR HARCOURT. Why, it would inevitably establish universal anarchy and confusion.

GRACE. I think they are pretty well established already.

SPANKER. Well, suppose it did, what has anarchy and confusion to do with the subject?

LADY GAY. Do look at my Dolly: he is arguing — talking politics — 'pon my life he is. [*Calling*] Mr. Spanker, my dear!

SPANKER. Excuse me, love, I am discussing a point of importance.

LADY GAY. Oh, that is delicious; he must discuss that to me. — [*She goes up and leads him down; he appears to have shaken off his gaucherie; she shakes her head*] Dolly! Dolly!

SPANKER. Pardon me, Lady Gay Spanker, I conceive your mutilation of my sponsorial appellation derogatory to my *amour propre*.

LADY GAY. Your what? Ho! ho!

SPANKER. And I particularly request that, for the future, I may not be treated with that cavalier spirit which does not become your sex, nor your station, your ladyship.

LADY GAY. You have been indulging till you have lost the little wit nature dribbled into your unfortunate little head — your brains want the whipper-in — you are not yourself.

SPANKER. Madam, I am doubly myself; and permit me to inform you, that unless you voluntarily pay obedience to my commands, I shall enforce them.

LADY GAY. Your commands!

SPANKER. Yes, madam; I mean to put a full stop to your hunting.

LADY GAY. You do! ah! [*Aside*] I can scarcely speak from delight. [*Aloud*] Who put such an idea into your

head, for I am sure it is not an original emanation of your genius?

SPANKER. Sir Harcourt Courtly, my friend; and now, mark me! I request, for your own sake, that I may not be compelled to assert my a — my authority, as your husband. I shall say no more than this — if you persist in this absurd rebellion —

LADY GAY. Well!

SPANKER. Contemplate a separation.

[*He looks at her haughtily, and retires*]

LADY GAY. Now I'm happy! My own little darling, inestimable Dolly, has tumbled into a spirit, somehow. Sir Harcourt, too! Ha! ha! he's trying to make him ill-treat me, so that his own suit may thrive.

SIR HARCOURT. [*Advances*] Lady Gay!

LADY GAY. Now for it.

SIR HARCOURT. What hours of misery were those I passed, when, by your secession, the room suffered a total eclipse.

LADY GAY. Ah! you flatter.

SIR HARCOURT. No, pardon me, that were impossible. No, believe me, I tried to join in the boisterous mirth, but my thoughts would desert to the drawing-room. Ah! how I envied the careless levity and cool indifference with which Mr. Spanker enjoyed your absence.

DAZZLE [*who is lounging in a chair*]. Max, that Madeira is worth its weight in gold; I hope you have more of it.

MAX. A pipe, I think.

DAZZLE. I consider a magnum of that nectar, and a meerschaum of kanaster, to consummate the ultimatum of all mundane bliss. To drown myself in liquid ecstasy, and then blow a cloud on which the enfranchised soul could soar above Olympus. — Oh!

[*Enter* JAMES]

JAMES. Mr. Charles Courtly!

SIR HARCOURT. Ah, now, Max, you must see a living apology for my conduct.

[*Enter* YOUNG COURTLY, *dressed very plainly*]

Well, Charles, how are you? Don't be afraid. There, Max, what do you say now?

MAX. Well, this is the most extraordinary likeness.

GRACE. [*Aside*] Yes — considering it is the original. I am not so easily deceived!

MAX. Sir, I am delighted to see you.

YOUNG COURTLY. Thank you, sir.

DAZZLE. Will you be kind enough to introduce me, Sir Harcourt?

SIR HARCOURT. This is Mr. Dazzle, Charles.

YOUNG COURTLY. Which?

[*Looking from* MR. SPANKER *to* DAZZLE]

SIR HARCOURT. [*To* LADY GAY] Is not that refreshing? Miss Harkaway — Charles, this is your mother, or rather will be.

YOUNG COURTLY. Madam, I shall love, honour, and obey you punctually.

[*Takes out a book, sighs, and goes up reading*]

[*Enter* JAMES]

SIR HARCOURT. You perceive? Quite unused to society — perfectly ignorant of every conventional rule of life.

JAMES. The Doctor and the young ladies have arrived. [*Exit*]

MAX. The young ladies — now we must to the ball — I make it a rule always to commence the festivities with a good old country dance — a rattling Sir Roger de Coverly; come, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Does this antiquity require a war-whoop in it?

MAX. Nothing but a nimble foot and a light heart.

SIR HARCOURT. Very antediluvian indispensables! Lady Gay Spanker, will you honour me by becoming my preceptor?

LADY GAY. Why, I am engaged — but [*Aloud*] on such a plea as Sir Harcourt's, I must waive all obstacles.

MAX. Now, Grace, girl — give your hand to Mr. Courtly.

GRACE. Pray, excuse me, uncle — I have a headache.

SIR HARCOURT. [*Aside*] Jealousy! by the gods. — Jealous of my devotions at another's fane! [*Aloud*] Charles, my boy! amuse Miss Grace during our absence. [*Exit with* LADY GAY]

MAX. But don't you dance, Mr. Courtly!

YOUNG COURTLY. Dance, sir! — I never dance — I can procure exercise in a much more rational manner — and music disturbs my meditations.

MAX. Well, do the gallant. [*Exit*]

YOUNG COURTLY. I never studied that Art — but I have a Prize Essay on a

Hydrostatic subject, which would delight her — for it enchanted the Reverend Doctor Pump, of Corpus Christi.

GRACE. [*Aside*] What on earth could have induced him to disguise himself in that frightful way! — I rather suspect some plot to entrap me into a confession.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Dare I confess this trick to her? No! Not until I have proved her affection indisputably. — Let me see — I must concoct. [*He takes a chair, and, forgetting his assumed character, is about to take his natural free manner. —* GRACE *looks surprised. — He turns abashed*] Madam, I have been desired to amuse you.

GRACE. Thank you.

YOUNG COURTLY. "The labour we delight in, physics pain." I will draw you a moral, ahem! Subject, the effects of inebriety! — which, according to Ben Jonson — means perplexion of the intellects, caused by imbibing spirituous liquors. — About an hour before my arrival, I passed an appalling evidence of the effects of this state — a carriage was overthrown — horses killed — gentleman in a helpless state, with his neck broken — all occasioned by the intoxication of the post-boy.

GRACE. That is very amusing.

YOUNG COURTLY. I found it edifying — nutritious food for reflection — the expiring man desired his best compliments to you.

GRACE. To me?

YOUNG COURTLY. Yes.

GRACE. His name was —

YOUNG COURTLY. Mr. Augustus Hamilton.

GRACE. Augustus! Oh!

[*Affects to faint*]

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Huzza!

GRACE. But where, sir, did this happen?

YOUNG COURTLY. About four miles down the road.

GRACE. He must be conveyed here.

[*Enter* SERVANT]

SERVANT. Mr. Meddle, madam.

[*Enter* MEDDLE]

MEDDLE. On very particular business.

GRACE. The very person. My dear sir!

MEDDLE. My dear madam!

GRACE. You must execute a very particular commission for me immediately. Mr. Hamilton has met with a frightful accident on the London road, and is in a dying state.

MEDDLE. Well! I have no hesitation in saying, he takes it uncommonly easy — he looks as if he was used to it.

GRACE. You mistake: that is not Mr. Hamilton, but Mr. Courtly, who will explain everything, and conduct you to the spot.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Oh! I must put a stop to all this, or I shall be found out. — [*Aloud*] Madam, that were useless; for I omitted to mention a small fact which occurred before I left Mr. Hamilton — he died.

GRACE. Dear me! Oh, then we needn't trouble you, Mr. Meddle. [*Music heard*] Hark! I hear they are commencing a waltz — if you will ask me — perhaps your society and conversation may tend to dispel the dreadful sensation you have aroused.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Hears of my death — screams out — and then asks me to waltz! I am bewildered! Can she suspect me? I wonder which she likes best — me or my double? Confound this disguise — I must retain it — I have gone too far with my dad to pull up now. — At your service, madam.

GRACE. [*Aside*] I will pay him well for this trick!

[*Exeunt, all but* MEDDLE]

MEDDLE. Well, if that is not Mr. Hamilton, scratch me out with a big blade, for I am a blot — a mistake upon the rolls. There is an error in the pleadings somewhere, and I will discover it. I would swear to his identity before the most discriminating jury. By the bye, this accident will form a capital excuse for my presence here. I just stepped in to see how matters worked, and — stay — here comes the bridegroom elect — and, oh! in his very arms, Lady Gay Spanker! [*Looks round*] Where are my witnesses? Oh, that some one else were here! However, I can retire and get some information, eh — Spanker versus Courtly — damages — witness.

[*Gets into an arm-chair, which he turns round*]

[*Enter* SIR HARCOURT, *supporting* LADY GAY]

SIR HARCOURT. This cool room will recover you.

LADY GAY. Excuse my trusting to you for support.

Sir Harcourt. I am transported! Allow me thus ever to support this lovely burden, and I shall conceive that Paradise is regained. [*They sit*]

Lady Gay. Oh! Sir Harcourt, I feel very faint.

Sir Harcourt. The waltz made you giddy.

Lady Gay. And I have left my salts in the other room.

Sir Harcourt. I always carry a flacon, for the express accommodation of the fair sex.

[*Producing a smelling-bottle*]

Lady Gay. Thank you — ah! [*She sighs*]

Sir Harcourt. What a sigh was there!

Lady Gay. The vapour of consuming grief.

Sir Harcourt. Grief? Is it possible! Have you a grief? Are you unhappy? Dear me!

Lady Gay. Am I not married?

Sir Harcourt. What a horrible state of existence!

Lady Gay. I am never contradicted, so there are none of those enlivening, interesting little differences, which so pleasingly diversify the monotony of conjugal life, like spots of verdure — no quarrels, like oases in the desert of matrimony — no rows.

Sir Harcourt. How vulgar! what a brute!

Lady Gay. I never have anything but my own way; and he won't permit me to spend more than I like.

Sir Harcourt. Mean-spirited wretch!

Lady Gay. How can I help being miserable?

Sir Harcourt. Miserable! I wonder you are not in a lunatic asylum, with such unheard-of barbarity!

Lady Gay. But worse than all that!

Sir Harcourt. Can it be out-heroded?

Lady Gay. Yes, I could forgive that — I do — it is my duty. But only imagine — picture to yourself, my dear Sir Harcourt, though I, the third daughter of an Earl, married him out of pity for his destitute and helpless situation as a bachelor with ten thousand a year — conceive, if you can — he actually permits me, with the most placid indifference, to flirt with any old fool I may meet.

Sir Harcourt. Good gracious! miserable idiot!

Lady Gay. I fear there is an incompatibility of temper, which renders a separation inevitable.

Sir Harcourt. Indispensable, my dear madam! Ah! had I been the happy possessor of such a realm of bliss — what a beatific eternity unfolds itself to my extending imagination! Had another man but looked at you, I should have annihilated him at once; and if he had the temerity to speak, his life alone could have expiated his crime.

Lady Gay. Oh, an existence of such a nature is too bright for the eye of thought — too sweet to bear reflection.

Sir Harcourt. My devotion, eternal, deep —

Lady Gay. Oh, Sir Harcourt!

Sir Harcourt [*more fervently*]. Your every thought should be a separate study, — each wish forestalled by the quick apprehension of a kindred soul.

Lady Gay. Alas! how can I avoid my fate?

Sir Harcourt. If a life — a heart — were offered to your astonished view by one who is considered the index of fashion — the vane of the *beau monde*, — if you saw him at your feet, begging, beseeching your acceptance of all, and more than this, what would your answer —

Lady Gay. Ah! I know of none so devoted!

Sir Harcourt. You do! [*Throwing himself upon his knees*] Behold Sir Harcourt Courtly!

[Meddle *jumps up in the chair*]

Lady Gay. [*Aside*] Ha! ha! Yoicks! Puss has broken cover.

Sir Harcourt. Speak, adored, dearest Lady Gay! — speak — will you fly from the tyranny, the wretched misery of such a monster's roof, and accept the soul which lives but in your presence!

Lady Gay. Do not press me. Oh, spare a weak, yielding woman, — be contented to know that you are, alas! too dear to me. But the world — the world would say —

Sir Harcourt. Let us be a precedent, to open a more extended and liberal view of matrimonial advantages to society.

Lady Gay. How irresistible is your argument! Oh! pause!

Sir Harcourt. I have ascertained for a fact, that every tradesman of mine lives with his wife, and thus you see it has become a vulgar and plebeian custom.

LADY GAY. Leave me; I feel I cannot withstand your powers of persuasion. Swear that you will never forsake me.

SIR HARCOURT. Dictate the oath. May I grow wrinkled, — may two inches be added to the circumference of my waist, — may I lose the fall in my back, — may I be old and ugly the instant I forego one tithe of adoration!

LADY GAY. I must believe you.

SIR HARCOURT. Shall we leave this detestable spot — this horrible vicinity?

LADY GAY. The sooner the better: to-morrow evening let it be. Now let me return; my absence will be remarked. [*He kisses her hand*] Do I appear confused? Has my agitation rendered me unfit to enter the room?

SIR HARCOURT. More angelic by a lovely tinge of heightened colour.

LADY GAY. To-morrow, in this room, which opens on the lawn.

SIR HARCOURT. At eleven o'clock.

LADY GAY. Have your carriage in waiting, and four horses. Remember, please be particular to have four; don't let the affair come off shabbily. Adieu, dear Sir Harcourt! [*Exit*]

SIR HARCOURT. Veni, vidi, vici! Hannibal, Cæsar, Napoleon, Alexander never completed so fair a conquest in so short a time. She dropped fascinated. This is an unprecedented example of the irresistible force of personal appearance combined with polished address. Poor creature! how she loves me! I pity so prostrating a passion, and ought to return it. I will: it is a duty I owe to society and fashion. [*Exit*]

MEDDLE. [*Turns the chair round*] "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." This is my tide — I am the only witness. "Virtue is sure to find its own reward." But I've no time to contemplate what I shall be — something huge. Let me see — Spanker *versus* Courtly — Crim. Con. — Damages placed at 150,000*l.*, at least, for juries always decimate your hopes.

[*Enter* MR. SPANKER]

SPANKER. I cannot find Gay anywhere.

MEDDLE. The plaintiff himself — I must commence the action. Mr. Spanker, as I have information of deep, vital importance to impart, will you take a seat? [*They sit solemnly.* MEDDLE *takes out a note-book and pencil*] Ahem! You have a wife?

[*Re-enter* LADY GAY *behind*]

SPANKER. Yes, I believe I —

MEDDLE. Will you be kind enough, without any prevarication, to answer my questions?

SPANKER. You alarm — I —

MEDDLE. Compose yourself and reserve your feelings; take time to consider. You have a wife?

SPANKER. Yes —

MEDDLE. He has a wife — good — a *bona-fide* wife — bound morally and legally to be your wife, and nobody else's in effect, except on your written permission —

SPANKER. But what has this —

MEDDLE. Hush! allow me, my dear sir, to congratulate you. [*Shakes his hand*]

SPANKER. What for?

MEDDLE. Lady Gay Spanker is about to dishonour the bond of wedlock by eloping from you.

SPANKER [*starting*]. What?

MEDDLE. Be patient — I thought you would be overjoyed. Will you place the affair in my hands, and I will venture to promise the largest damages on record.

SPANKER. Damn the damages! — I want my wife. Oh, I'll go and ask her not to run away. She may run away with me — she may hunt — she may ride — anything she likes. Oh, sir, let us put a stop to this affair.

MEDDLE. Put a stop to it! do not alarm me, sir. Sir, you will spoil the most exquisite brief that was ever penned. It must proceed — it shall proceed. It is illegal to prevent it, and I will bring an action against you for wilful intent to injure the profession.

SPANKER. Oh, what an ass I am! Oh, I have driven her to this. It was all that damned brandy punch on the top of Burgundy. What a fool I was!

MEDDLE. It was the happiest moment of your life.

SPANKER. So I thought at the time; but we live to grow wiser. Tell me, who is the vile seducer?

MEDDLE. Sir Harcourt Courtly.

SPANKER. Ha! he is my best friend.

MEDDLE. I should think he is. If you will accompany me — here is a verbatim copy of the whole transaction in short-hand — sworn to by me.

SPANKER. Only let me have Gay back again.

MEDDLE. Even that may be arranged: — this way.

SPANKER. That ever I should live to see my wife run away. Oh, I will do any thing — keep two packs of hounds — buy up every horse and ass in England — myself included — oh!

[*Exit with* MEDDLE]

LADY GAY. Ha! ha! ha! Poor Dolly! I'm sorry I must continue to deceive him. If he would kindle up a little — So, that fellow overheard all — well, so much the better.

[*Enter* YOUNG COURTLY]

YOUNG COURTLY. My dear madam, how fares the plot? does my Governor nibble?

LADY GAY. Nibble! he is caught, and in the basket. I have just left him with a hook in his gills, panting for very lack of element. But how goes on your encounter?

YOUNG COURTLY. Bravely. By a simple ruse, I have discovered that she loves me. I see but one chance against the best termination I could hope.

LADY GAY. What is that?

YOUNG COURTLY. My father has told me that I return to town again to-morrow afternoon.

LADY GAY. Well, I insist you stop and dine — keep out of the way.

YOUNG COURTLY. Oh, but what excuse shall I offer for disobedience? What can I say when he sees me before dinner?

LADY GAY. Say — say Grace.

[*Enter* GRACE, *who gets behind the window curtains*]

YOUNG COURTLY. Ha! ha!

LADY GAY. I have arranged to elope with Sir Harcourt myself to-morrow night.

YOUNG COURTLY. The deuce you have!

LADY GAY. Now, if you could persuade Grace to follow that example — his carriage will be waiting at the Park — be there a little before eleven, and it will just prevent our escape. Can you make her agree to that?

YOUNG COURTLY. Oh, without the slightest difficulty, if Mr. Augustus Hamilton supplicates.

LADY GAY. Success attend you.

[*Going*]

YOUNG COURTLY. I will bend the haughty Grace. [*Going*]

LADY GAY. Do. [*Exeunt severally*]

GRACE. Will you?

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

SCENE FIRST. — *A Drawing-Room in Oak Hall*

[*Enter* COOL]

COOL. This is the most serious affair Sir Harcourt has ever been engaged in. I took the liberty of considering him a fool when he told me he was going to marry: but voluntarily to incur another man's incumbrance is very little short of madness. If he continues to conduct himself in this absurd manner, I shall be compelled to dismiss him.

[*Enter* SIR HARCOURT, *equipped for travelling*]

SIR HARCOURT. Cool!

COOL. Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Is my chariot in waiting?

COOL. For the last half hour at the park wicket. But, pardon the insinuation, sir; would it not be more advisable to hesitate a little for a short reflection before you undertake the heavy responsibility of a woman?

SIR HARCOURT. No: hesitation destroys the romance of a *faux pas*, and reduces it to the level of a mere mercantile calculation.

COOL. What is to be done with Mr. Charles?

SIR HARCOURT. Ay, much against my will, Lady Gay prevailed on me to permit him to remain. You, Cool, must return him to college. Pass through London, and deliver these papers: here is a small notice of the coming elopement for the *Morning Post;* this, by an eye-witness, for the *Herald;* this, with all the particulars, for the *Chronicle;* and the full and circumstantial account for the evening journals — after which, meet us at Boulogne.

COOL. Very good, Sir Harcourt.

[*Going*]

SIR HARCOURT. Lose no time. Remember — Hotel Anglais, Boulogne-sur-Mer. And, Cool, bring a few copies with you, and don't forget to distribute some amongst very particular friends.

Cool. It shall be done.

[*Exit* Cool]

Sir Harcourt. With what indifference does a man of the world view the approach of the most perilous catastrophe! My position, hazardous as it is, entails none of that nervous excitement which a neophyte in the school of fashion would feel. I am as cool and steady as possible. Habit, habit! Oh! how many roses will fade upon the cheek of beauty, when the defalcation of Sir Harcourt Courtly is whispered — then hinted — at last, confirmed and bruited. I think I see them. Then, on my return, they will not dare to eject me — I am their sovereign! Whoever attempts to think of treason, I'll banish him from the West End — I'll cut him — I'll put him out of fashion!

[*Enter* Lady Gay]

Lady Gay. Sir Harcourt!

Sir Harcourt. At your feet.

Lady Gay. I had hoped you would have repented.

Sir Harcourt. Repented!

Lady Gay. Have you not come to say it was a jest? — say you have!

Sir Harcourt. Love is too sacred a subject to be trifled with. Come, let us fly! See, I have procured disguises —

Lady Gay. My courage begins to fail me. Let me return.

Sir Harcourt. Impossible!

Lady Gay. Where do you intend to take me?

Sir Harcourt. You shall be my guide. The carriage waits.

Lady Gay. You will never desert me?

Sir Harcourt. Desert! Oh, heavens! Nay, do not hesitate — flight, now, alone is left to your desperate situation! Come, every moment is laden with danger. [*They are going*]

Lady Gay. Oh! gracious!

Sir Harcourt. Hush! what is it?

Lady Gay. I have forgotten — I must return.

Sir Harcourt. Impossible!

Lady Gay. I must! I must! I have left Max — a pet staghound, in his basket — without whom, life would be unendurable — I could not exist!

Sir Harcourt. No, no. Let him be sent after us in a hamper.

Lady Gay. In a hamper! Remorseless man! Go — you love me not. How would you like to be sent after me — in a hamper? Let me fetch him. Hark! I hear him squeal! Oh! Max — Max!

Sir Harcourt. Hush! for heaven's sake. They'll imagine you're calling the Squire. I hear footsteps; where can I retire?

[*Enter* Meddle, Spanker, Dazzle, *and* Max. Lady Gay *screams*]

Meddle. Spanker *versus* Courtly! — I subpœna every one of you as witnesses! — I have 'em ready — here they are — shilling a-piece.

[*Giving them round*]

Lady Gay. Where is Sir Harcourt?

Meddle. There! — bear witness! — call on the vile delinquent for protection!

Spanker. Oh! his protection!

Lady Gay. What? ha!

Meddle. I'll swear I overheard the whole elopement planned — before any jury! — where's the book?

Spanker. Do you hear, you profligate?

Lady Gay. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Dazzle. But where is this wretched Lothario?

Meddle. Ay, where is the defendant?

Spanker. Where lies the hoary villain?

Lady Gay. What villain?

Spanker. That will not serve you! — I'll not be blinded that way!

Meddle. We won't be blinded any way!

Max. I must seek Sir Harcourt, and demand an explanation! Such a thing never occurred in Oak Hall before! — It must be cleared up! [*Exit*]

Meddle. [*Aside to* Spanker] Now, take my advice; remember your gender. Mind the notes I have given you.

Spanker. [*Aside*] All right! Here they are! Now, madam, I have procured the highest legal opinion on this point.

Meddle. Hear! hear!

Spanker. And the question resolves itself into a — into — What's this?

[*Looks at notes*]

Meddle. A nutshell!

Spanker. Yes, we are in a nutshell. Will you, in every respect, subscribe to my requests — desires — commands — [*Looks at notes*] — orders — imperative — indicative — injunctive — or otherwise?

Lady Gay. [*Aside*] 'Pon my life, he's actually going to assume the ribbons, and take the box-seat. I must put a stop to this. I will! It will all

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end in smoke. I know Sir Harcourt would rather run than fight!

DAZZLE. Oh! I smell powder! — command my services. My dear madam, can I be of any use?

SPANKER. Oh! a challenge! — I must consult my legal adviser.

MEDDLE. No! impossible!

DAZZLE. Pooh! the easiest thing in life! Leave it to me: What has an attorney to do with affairs of honour? — they are out of his element.

MEDDLE. Compromise the question! Pull his nose! — we have no objection to that.

DAZZLE [*turning to* LADY GAY]. Well, we have no objection either — have we?

LADY GAY. No! — pull his nose — that will be something.

MEDDLE. And, moreover, it is not exactly actionable!

DAZZLE. Isn't it! — thank you — I'll note down that piece of information — it may be useful.

MEDDLE. How! cheated out of my legal knowledge.

LADY GAY. Mr. Spanker, I am determined! — I insist upon a challenge being sent to Sir Harcourt Courtly! — and — mark me — if you refuse to fight him — I will.

MEDDLE. Don't. Take my advice — you'll incapacit —

LADY GAY. Look you, Mr. Meddle, unless you wish me to horsewhip you, hold your tongue.

MEDDLE. What a she-tiger — I shall retire and collect my costs. [*Exit*]

LADY GAY. Mr. Spanker, oblige me by writing as I dictate.

SPANKER. He's gone — and now I am defenceless! Is this the fate of husbands? — A duel! — Is this the result of becoming master of my own family?

LADY GAY. "Sir, the situation in which you were discovered with my wife, admits neither of explanation nor apology."

SPANKER. Oh, yes! but it does — I don't believe you really intended to run quite away.

LADY GAY. You do not; but I know better, I say I did! and if it had not been for your unfortunate interruption, I do not know where I might have been by this time. Go on.

SPANKER. "Nor apology." I'm writing my own death-warrant, — committing suicide on compulsion.

LADY GAY. "The bearer will arrange all preliminary matters, for another day must see this sacrilege expiated by your life, or that of

"Yours very sincerely,
"Dolly Spanker."

Now, Mr. Dazzle.

[*Gives it over his head*]

DAZZLE. The document is as sacred as if it were a hundred-pound bill.

LADY GAY. We trust to your discretion.

SPANKER. His discretion! Oh, put your head in a tiger's mouth, and trust to his discretion!

DAZZLE [*sealing letter, etc., with* SPANKER'S *seal*]. My dear Lady Gay, matters of this kind are indigenous to my nature, independently of their pervading fascination to all humanity; but this is more especially delightful, as you may perceive I shall be the intimate and bosom friend of both parties.

LADY GAY. Is it not the only alternative in such a case?

DAZZLE. It is a beautiful panacea in any, in every case. [*Going — returns*] By the way, where would you like this party of pleasure to come off? Open air shooting is pleasant enough, but if I might venture to advise, we could order half a dozen of that Madeira and a box of cigars into the billiard-room, so make a night of it; take up the irons every now and then; string for first shot, and blaze away at one another in an amicable and gentlemanlike way; so conclude the matter before the potency of the liquor could disturb the individuality of the object, or the smoke of the cigars render the outline dubious. Does such an arrangement coincide with your views?

LADY GAY. Perfectly.

DAZZLE. I trust shortly to be the harbinger of happy tidings. [*Exit*]

SPANKER [*coming forward*]. Lady Gay Spanker, are you ambitious of becoming a widow?

LADY GAY. Why, Dolly, woman is at best but weak, and weeds become me.

SPANKER. Female! am I to be immolated on the altar of your vanity?

LADY GAY. If you become pathetic, I shall laugh.

SPANKER. Farewell — base, heartless, unfeeling woman! [*Exit*]

LADY GAY. Ha! well, so I am. I am heartless, for he is a dear, good little fellow, and I ought not to play upon his feelings: but 'pon my life he sounds so

well up at concert pitch, that I feel disinclined to untune him. Poor Dolly, I didn't think he cared so much about me. I will put him out of pain.

[*Exit.* SIR HARCOURT *comes down*]

SIR HARCOURT. I have been a fool! a dupe to my own vanity. I shall be pointed at as a ridiculous old coxcomb — and so I am. The hour of conviction is *arrived.* Have I deceived myself? — Have I turned all my senses inward — looking towards self — always self? — and has the world been ever laughing at me? Well, if they have, I will revert the joke; — they may say I am an old ass; but I will prove that I am neither too old to repent my folly, nor such an ass as to flinch from confessing it. A blow half met is but half felt.

[*Enter* DAZZLE]

DAZZLE. Sir Harcourt, may I be permitted the honour of a few minutes' conversation with you?

SIR HARCOURT. With pleasure.

DAZZLE. Have the kindness to throw your eye over that. [*Gives the letter*]

SIR HARCOURT [*reads*]. "Situation — my wife — apology — expiate — my life." Why, this is intended for a challenge.

DAZZLE. Why, indeed, I am perfectly aware that it is not quite *en regle* in the couching, for with that I had nothing to do; but I trust that the irregularity of the composition will be confounded in the beauty of the subject.

SIR HARCOURT. Mr. Dazzle, are you in earnest?

DAZZLE. Sir Harcourt Courtly, upon my honour I am, and I hope that no previous engagement will interfere with an immediate reply *in propriâ personâ.* We have fixed upon the billiard-room as the scene of action, which I have just seen properly illuminated in honour of the occasion; and, by-the-bye, if your implements are not handy, I can oblige you with a pair of the sweetest things you ever handled — hair-triggered — saw grip; heir-looms in my family. I regard them almost in the light of relations.

SIR HARCOURT. Sir, I shall avail myself of one of your relatives. [*Aside*] One of the hereditaments of my folly — I must accept it. [*Aloud*] Sir, I shall be happy to meet Mr. Spanker at any time or place he may appoint.

DAZZLE. The sooner the better, sir. Allow me to offer you my arm. I see you understand these matters; — my friend Spanker is wofully ignorant — miserably uneducated. [*Exeunt*]

[*Re-enter* MAX, *with* GRACE]

MAX. Give ye joy, girl, give ye joy. Sir Harcourt Courtly must consent to waive all title to your hand in favour of his son Charles.

GRACE. Oh, indeed! Is that the pith of your congratulation — humph! the exchange of an old fool for a young one? Pardon me if I am not able to distinguish the advantage.

MAX. Advantage!

GRACE. Moreover, by what right am I a transferable cipher in the family of Courtly? So, then, my fate is reduced to this, to sacrifice my fortune, or unite myself with a worm-eaten edition of the Classics!

MAX. Why, he certainly is not such a fellow as I could have chosen for my little Grace; but consider, to retain fifteen thousand a-year! Now, tell me honestly — but why should I say *honestly?* Speak, girl, would you rather not have the lad?

GRACE. Why do you ask me?

MAX. Why, look ye, I'm an old fellow; another hunting season or two, and I shall be in at my own death — I can't leave you this house and land, because they are entailed, nor can I say I'm sorry for it, for it is a good law; but I have a little box with my Grace's name upon it, where, since your father's death and miserly will, I have yearly placed a certain sum to be yours, should you refuse to fulfil the conditions prescribed.

GRACE. My own dear uncle!

[*Clasping him round the neck*]

MAX. Pooh! pooh! what's to do now? Why, it was only a trifle — why, you little rogue, what are you crying about?

GRACE. Nothing, but —

MAX. But what? Come, out with it: Will you have young Courtly?

[*Re-enter* LADY GAY]

LADY GAY. Oh! Max, Max!

MAX. Why, what's amiss with you?

LADY GAY. I'm a wicked woman!

MAX. What have you done?

LADY GAY. Everything — oh, I thought Sir Harcourt was a coward, but now I find a man may be a coxcomb without being a poltroon. Just to show my husband how inconvenient it is to

hold the ribands sometimes, I made him send a challenge to the old fellow, and he, to my surprise, accepted it, and is going to blow my Dolly's brains out in the billiard-room.

MAX. The devil!

LADY GAY. Just when I imagined I had got my whip hand of him again, out comes my linch-pin — and over I go — oh!

MAX. I will soon put a stop to that — a duel under my roof! Murder in Oak Hall! I'll shoot them both! [*Exit*]

GRACE. Are you really in earnest?

LADY GAY. Do you think it looks like a joke? Oh! Dolly, if you allow yourself to be shot, I will never forgive you — never! Ah, he is a great fool, Grace! but I can't tell why, but I would sooner lose my bridle hand than he should be hurt on my account.

[*Enter* SIR HARCOURT COURTLY]

Tell me — tell me — have you shot him — is he dead — my dear Sir Harcourt? You horrid old brute — have you killed him? I shall never forgive myself. [*Exit*]

GRACE. Oh! Sir Harcourt, what has happened?

SIR HARCOURT. Don't be alarmed, I beg — your uncle interrupted us — discharged the weapons — locked the challenger up in the billiard-room to cool his rage.

GRACE. Thank heaven!

SIR HARCOURT. Miss Grace, to apologise for my conduct were useless, more especially as I am confident that no feelings of indignation or sorrow for my late acts are cherished by you; but still, reparation is in my power, and I not only waive all title, right, or claim to your person or your fortune, but freely admit your power to bestow them on a more worthy object.

GRACE. This generosity, Sir Harcourt, is most unexpected.

SIR HARCOURT. No, not generosity, but simply justice, justice!

GRACE. May I still beg a favour?

SIR HARCOURT. Claim anything that is mine to grant.

GRACE. You have been duped by Lady Gay Spanker, I have also been cheated and played upon by her and Mr. Hamilton — may I beg that the contract between us may, to all appearances, be still held good?

SIR HARCOURT. Certainly, although I confess I cannot see the point of your purpose.

[*Enter* MAX, *with* YOUNG COURTLY]

MAX. Now, Grace, I have brought the lad.

GRACE. Thank you, uncle, but the trouble was quite unnecessary — Sir Harcourt holds to his original contract.

MAX. The deuce he does!

GRACE. And I am willing — nay, eager, to become Lady Courtly.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] The deuce you are!

MAX. But, Sir Harcourt —

SIR HARCOURT. One word, Max, for an instant. [*They retire*]

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] What can this mean? Can it be possible that I have been mistaken — that she is not in love with Augustus Hamilton?

GRACE. Now we shall find how he intends to bend the haughty Grace.

YOUNG COURTLY. Madam — Miss, I mean, — are you really in love with my father?

GRACE. No, indeed I am not.

YOUNG COURTLY. Are you in love with any one else?

GRACE. No, or I should not marry him.

YOUNG COURTLY. Then you actually accept him as your real husband?

GRACE. In the common acceptation of the word.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Hang me if I have not been a pretty fool! [*Aloud*] Why do you marry him, if you don't care about him?

GRACE. To save my fortune.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Mercenary, cold-hearted girl! [*Aloud*] But if there be any one you love in the least — marry him; — were you never in love?

GRACE. Never!

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Oh! what an ass I've been! [*Aloud*] I heard Lady Gay mention something about a Mr. Hamilton.

GRACE. Ah, yes, a person who, after an acquaintanceship of two days, had the assurance to make love to me, and I —

YOUNG COURTLY. Yes, — you — Well?

GRACE. I pretended to receive his attentions.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] It was the best pretence I ever saw.

GRACE. An absurd, vain, conceited

coxcomb, who appeared to imagine that I was so struck with his fulsome speech, that he could turn me round his finger.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] My very thoughts!

GRACE. But he was mistaken.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Confoundedly! [*Aloud*] Yet you seemed rather concerned about the news of his death?

GRACE. His accident! No, but —

YOUNG COURTLY. But what?

GRACE. [*Aside*] What can I say? [*Aloud*] Ah! but my maid Pert's brother is a post-boy, and I thought he might have sustained an injury, poor boy.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] Damn the post-boy! [*Aloud*] Madam, if the retention of your fortune be the plea on which you are about to bestow your hand on one you do not love, and whose very actions speak his carelessness for that inestimable jewel he is incapable of appreciating — Know that I am devotedly, madly attached to you.

GRACE. You, sir? Impossible!

YOUNG COURTLY. Not at all, — but inevitable, — I have been so for a long time.

GRACE. Why, you never saw me till last night.

YOUNG COURTLY. I have seen you in imagination — you are the ideal I have worshipped.

GRACE. Since you press me into a confession, — which nothing but this could bring me to speak, — know, I did love poor Augustus Hamilton —

[*Re-enter* MAX *and* SIR HARCOURT]

but he — he is — no — more! Pray, spare me, sir.

YOUNG COURTLY. [*Aside*] She loves me! And, oh! what a situation I am in! — if I own I am the man, my Governor will overhear, and ruin me — if I do not, she'll marry him. — What is to be done?

[*Enter* LADY GAY]

LADY GAY. Where have you put my Dolly? I have been racing all round the house — tell me, is he quite dead!

MAX. I'll have him brought in. [*Exit*]

SIR HARCOURT. My dear madam, you must perceive this unfortunate occurrence was no fault of mine. I was compelled to act as I have done — I was willing to offer any apology, but that resource was excluded, as unacceptable.

LADY GAY. I know — I know — 'twas I made with him that letter — there was no apology required — 'twas I that apparently seduced you from the paths of propriety, — 'twas all a joke, and here is the end of it.

[*Enter* MAX, MR. SPANKER, *and* DAZZLE]

Oh! if he had but lived to say, "I forgive you, Gay!"

SPANKER. So I do!

LADY GAY [*seeing him*]. Ah! he is alive!

SPANKER. Of course I am!

LADY GAY. Ha! ha! ha! [*Embraces him*] I will never hunt again — unless you wish it. Sell your stable —

SPANKER. No, no — do what you like — say what you like for the future! I find the head of a family has less ease and more responsibility than I, as a member, could have anticipated. I abdicate!

[*Enter* COOL]

SIR HARCOURT. Ah! Cool, here! [*Aside to* COOL] You may destroy those papers — I have altered my mind, — and I do not intend to elope at present. Where are they?

COOL. As you seemed particular, Sir Harcourt, I sent them off by mail to London.

SIR HARCOURT. Why, then, a full description of the whole affair will be published to-morrow.

COOL. Most irretrievably!

SIR HARCOURT. You must post to town immediately, and stop the press.

COOL. Beg pardon — they would see me hanged first, Sir Harcourt; they don't frequently meet with such a profitable lie.

SERVANT. [*Without*] No, sir! no, sir!

[*Enter* SIMPSON]

SIMPSON. Sir, there is a gentleman, who calls himself Mr. Solomon Isaacs, insists upon following me up.

[*Enter* MR. SOLOMON ISAACS]

ISAACS. Mr. Courtly, you will excuse my performance of a most disagreeable duty at any time, but more especially in such a manner. I must beg the honour of your company to town.

SIR HARCOURT. What! — how! what for?

ISAACS. For debt, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Arrested? — impossible! Here must be some mistake.

ISAACS. Not the slightest, sir. Judgment has been given in five cases, for the last three months; but Mr. Courtly is an eel rather too nimble for my men. — We have been on his track, and traced him down to this village, with Mr. Dazzle.

DAZZLE. Ah! Isaacs! how are you?

ISAACS. Thank you, sir.

[*Speaks to* SIR HARCOURT]

MAX. Do you know him?

DAZZLE. Oh, intimately! Distantly related to his family — same arms on our escutcheon — empty purse falling through a hole in a — pocket: motto, "Requiescat in pace" — which means, "Let virtue be its own reward."

SIR HARCOURT [*To* ISAACS] Oh, I thought there was a mistake! Know, to your misfortune, that Mr. Hamilton was the person you dogged to Oak Hall, between whom and my son a most remarkable likeness exists.

ISAACS. Ha! ha! Know, to your misfortune, Sir Harcourt, that Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Courtly are one and the same person!

SIR HARCOURT. Charles!

YOUNG COURTLY. Concealment is in vain — I am Augustus Hamilton.

SIR HARCOURT. Hang me, if I didn't think it all along! Oh, you infernal, cozening dog!

ISAACS. Now, then, Mr. Hamilton —

GRACE. Stay, sir — Mr. Charles Courtly is under age — ask his father.

SIR HARCOURT. Ahem! — I won't — I won't pay a shilling of the rascal's debts — not a sixpence!

GRACE. Then, I will — you may retire. [*Exit* ISAACS]

YOUNG COURTLY. I can now perceive the generous point of your conduct towards me; and, believe me, I appreciate, and will endeavour to deserve it.

MAX. Ha! ha! Come, Sir Harcourt, you have been fairly beaten — you must forgive him — say you will.

SIR HARCOURT. So, sir, it appears you have been leading, covertly, an infernal town life?

YOUNG COURTLY. Yes, please, father.

[*Imitating* MASTER CHARLES]

SIR HARCOURT. None of your humbug sir! [*Aside*] He is my own son — how could I expect him to keep out of the fire? [*Aloud*] And you, Mr. Cool! — have you been deceiving me?

COOL. Oh! Sir Harcourt, if your perception was played upon, how could I be expected to see?

SIR HARCOURT. Well, it would be useless to withhold my hand. There, boy! [*He gives his hand to* YOUNG COURTLY. GRACE *comes down on the other side, and offers her hand; he takes it*] What is all this? What do you want?

YOUNG COURTLY. Your blessing, father.

GRACE. If you please, father.

SIR HARCOURT. Oho! the mystery is being solved. So, so, you young scoundrel, you have been making love — under the rose.

LADY GAY. He learnt that from you, Sir Harcourt.

SIR HARCOURT. Ahem! What would you do now, if I were to withhold my consent?

GRACE. *Do* without it.

MAX. The will says, if Grace marries any one but you, — her property reverts to your heir-apparent — and there he stands.

LADY GAY. Make virtue of necessity.

SPANKER. I married from inclination; and see how happy I am. And if ever I have a son —

LADY GAY. Hush! Dolly, dear!

SIR HARCOURT. Well! take her, boy! Although you are too young to marry. [*They retire with* MAX]

LADY GAY. Am I forgiven, Sir Harcourt?

SIR HARCOURT. Ahem! Why — a — [*Aside*] Have you really deceived me?

LADY GAY. Can you not see through this?

SIR HARCOURT. And you still love me?

LADY GAY. As much as I ever did.

SIR HARCOURT [*is about to kiss her hand, when* SPANKER *interposes between*]. A very handsome ring, indeed.

SPANKER. Very.

[*Puts her arm in his, and they go up*]

SIR HARCOURT. Poor little Spanker!

MAX [*coming down, aside to* SIR HARCOURT]. One point I wish to have settled. Who is Mr. Dazzle?

SIR HARCOURT. A relative of the Spankers, he told me.

MAX. Oh, no, a near connexion of yours.

SIR HARCOURT. Never saw him before I came down here, in all my life. [*To* YOUNG COURTLY] Charles, who is Mr. Dazzle?

YOUNG COURTLY. Dazzle, Dazzle, — will you excuse an impertinent question? — but who the deuce are you?

DAZZLE. Certainly. I have not the remotest idea.

ALL. How, sir?

DAZZLE. Simple question as you may think it, it would puzzle half the world to answer. One thing I can vouch — Nature made me a gentleman — that is, I live on the best that can be procured for credit. I never spend my own money when I can oblige a friend. I'm always thick on the winning horse. I'm an epidemic on the trade of a tailor. For further particulars, inquire of any sitting magistrate.

SIR HARCOURT. And these are the deeds which attest your title to the name of gentleman? I perceive that you have caught the infection of the present age. Charles, permit me, as your father, and you, sir, as his friend, to correct you on one point. Barefaced assurance is the vulgar substitute for gentlemanly ease; and there are many who, by aping the *vices* of the great, imagine that they elevate themselves to the rank of those, whose faults alone they copy. No, sir! The title of gentleman is the only one *out* of any monarch's gift, yet within the reach of every peasant. It should be engrossed by *Truth* — stamped with *Honour* — sealed with *good-feeling* — signed *Man* — and enrolled in every true young English heart.

THE END

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

A TRAGEDY

(1843)

BY ROBERT BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING

(1812–1889)

The career of Robert Browning, as a dramatist, is so indissolubly connected with the energies and activities of Macready, that this aspect of his art may very readily be viewed separately from the bulk of his work as a poet. But an understanding of the characteristics which mark Browning as a dramatist is more fully reached when one has formed a clear idea of his style and manner as a poet.

Dramatic technique is not characterized or dominated by the contemplative spirit. It does not lend itself to any involved thought or to over-fine moral distinctions. It must be direct, always forward-moving, and as active in an external sense as it is active in an internal sense.

Browning, the poet, is marked by closeness of thought, by a certain type of dramatic exposition which lent itself not to an interplay of character against character so much as to an interplay of emotion against emotion in a single individual. The consequence is, one finds his "Dramatic Lyrics", "Romances", and "Idyls", together with his wonderful collection of monologues in "Men and Women", rich in the elements from which great drama might be evolved. They are rich in imaginative quality, in many-sided understanding of character, in interplay of emotion and in effectiveness of situation. They indicate a dominant tendency on the part of the poet to deal with unusual thought in an unusual manner; to convey, by means of a line, some odd bit of information, or to laud, in an entire poem, a life philosophy of some obscure scholar, artist, or ecclesiastic. Browning's thought, in all of his poetry, is compact, — so compact, indeed, that there is confusion in its very quickness of transition from point to point. This obscurity was not wholly a habit of mind, but it became a habit of expression, and the reader of Browning, though he may find small comfort in the compliment, must understand that much of the difficulty in comprehending Browning is due to the poet's belief that his reader knew quite as much as he did.

One might say, therefore, before examining the dramas of Robert Browning, that the habit of the poet would meet with many disfavours on the stage. His genius, while dramatic, was not dramatic in the sense of the theatre, and one has only to read the opening discussions in "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon", or in "Colombe's Birthday", to note what the difficulty would be in the way of stage presentation. There has crept into most of his work those splendid lyric touches — like inserted jewels — such as one finds in the third scene of the first act of "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" — a lyrical quality which, at its best, is remarkable and is fraught with even deeper beauty of thought than is to be found in the best of Tennyson.

It is not necessary for us to record fully the life of Robert Browning. He was born, May 7, 1812, in the parish of St. Giles, Camberwell, London, and he died at the Palazzo Rezzonico, the Grand Canal, Venice, December 12, 1889. Readers of Mrs. Sutherland Orr's "Life" and "Handbook", and of Gilbert Chesterton's

very brilliant contribution to the *English Men of Letters Series* will be placed sufficiently in touch with the mere events of his career. In addition to which, a most commendable edition of some of the Browning dramas, edited by Arlo Bates, and published in the *Belles Lettres Series* (D. C. Heath & Co.), will give the student an excellent preparation for a consideration of Browning's dramatic work.

It is only necessary for me to say here that his career as a dramatist began about 1837, when, having made the acquaintance of Macready, he wrote "Strafford" for that actor, and dedicated the book to him when it was published in London the same year.

The play was acted for the first time at Covent Garden Theatre, on May 1, 1837, with Mr. Macready as *Strafford* and Miss Helen Faucit as *Lady Carlyle*. This was followed, in 1841, by "Pippa Passes", dedicated to Sargeant Talfourd, himself a dramatist of some note. And this drama, a series of lyrical experiences in the life of a very appealing character, stands to-day as an effective example of Browning at his simplest and most lyrical height.

In 1842, "King Victor and King Charles", a tragedy, was published, followed, in 1843, by "The Return of the Druses", another tragedy, and "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon", which has been selected for inclusion in the present volume.

The recorded stage history of this latter play is fully revealed in the Browning commentaries and in the Macready diaries. The first mention made by the actor was on January 25, 1843, when he had evidently received the manuscript, and had spent several days in careful consideration of its merits. On the twenty-eighth, he went to the Drury Lane Theatre and heard from Wilmot, who had read "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" to the company; he reported that they had laughed at it and that Anderson had joked about it. On the twenty-ninth, Browning called to see Macready and was told of the company's attitude, and Macready advised him to alter the second act. On the thirty-first, when the actor went to Drury Lane, according to his diary, he found Browning waiting for him in a state of great excitement:

> He abused the door-keeper and was in a very great passion. I calmly apologized for having detained him, observing that I had made a great effort to meet him at all. He had not given his *name* to the door-keeper, who had told him he might walk into the green-room; but his dignity was mortally wounded. I fear he is a very conceited man. Went over his play with him, then looked over part of it.

On February 1, Macready was still reading the Browning text and making cuts. He notes:

> Serle called, and I told him of my inability to meet my work — that I *could not* play this part of Browning's unless the whole work of the theatre stopped, that I thought it best to reduce it to its proper form — three acts, and let Phelps do it on all accounts. He concurred with me.

On February 4, rehearsals began, but, by the sixth, Phelps was so ill that Macready decided to understudy him. On February 7, the actor says:

> Rehearsed Browning's play, with the idea of acting the part of *Lord Tresham*, if Mr. Phelps should continue ill. Browning came and in better humour than I have lately seen him.

On February 8, rehearsals were still under way, and Macready's mood was one of despair. The following entry of February 10 throws further light on the subject:

> Began the consideration and study of the part of *Tresham*, which was to occupy my single thoughts till accomplished. About a quarter past one a note came from Willmot, informing me that Mr. Phelps would do the part, if he "died for it", so that my time had been lost. Arrived I applied to business; offered to give to Browning and Mr. Phelps the benefit of my consideration and study in the cuts, etc. I had made one I thought particularly valuable, not letting *Tresham* die, but consigning him to a convent. Browning, however, in the worst taste, manner, and spirit, declined any further alterations, expressing himself perfectly satisfied with the manner in which Mr. Phelps executed *Lord Tresham.* I had no more to say. I could only think Mr. Browning a very disagreeable and offensively mannered person. *Voilà tout!*

On February 11, this confession is made by Macready:

> Directed the rehearsal of "Blot on [sic.] the 'Scutcheon," and made many valuable improvements. Browning seemed desirous to explain or qualify the strange carriage and temper of yesterday, and laid much blame on Forster for irritating him. Saw the play of "Blot on the 'Scutcheon," which was badly acted in Phelps's and Mrs. Stirling's parts — pretty well in Anderson's, very well in Helen Faucit's. I was *angry* after the play about the call being directed without me.

The last entry is on February 16, when Macready mentions a letter received from the Lord Chamberlain, demanding to know by what authority he had played "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon."

From this outline of events, one can readily imagine several things: first, vanity, conceit, and jealous domination on the part of Macready, characteristics which have been noted in the introduction to the Bulwer play; on the other hand, a suggestion of misunderstanding which Macready failed to record fully or fairly in his diaries. If the play was badly handled when read to the company, there must have been some reason behind the mishandling of the manuscript. Undoubtedly the relations between Browning and Macready were strained throughout the preparations for the first performance of the play. The actor's repeated changes of text, and his attempted alterations of motif must have been galling to the poet, whose work was so organic as to allow of no artificial and theatrical transpositions of scenes and motives. Browning entirely disapproved of the stage version of the play as given. In consequence, Moxon, his publisher, hastened to issue the text, as written by Browning, within twenty-four hours, in order to forestall any of Macready's corrections. This prompted No. 5 of "Bells and Pomegranates." It is recorded that the play was written within five days.

Let us now see Browning's own impression of what occurred during the negotiations and preparations preceding the first performance of "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon." Turning to Mrs. Sutherland Orr's "Life", there is a letter written to a Mr. Hill which is here quoted in full:

19, Warwick Crescent:
December 15, 1884.

My dear Mr. Hill,

It was kind and considerate of you to suppress the paragraph which you send me — and of which the publication would have been unpleasant for reasons quite other than as regarding my own work, — which exists to defend or accuse itself. You will judge of the true reasons when I tell you the facts — so much of them as contradicts the statements of your critic — who, I suppose, has received a stimulus from the notice, in an American paper which arrived last week, of Mr. Lawrence Barrett's intention "shortly to produce the play" in New York — and subsequently in London: so that "the failure" of forty-one years ago might be duly influential at present — or two years hence, perhaps. The "mere amateurs" are no high game.

Macready received and accepted the play, while he was engaged at the Haymarket, and retained it for Drury Lane, of which I was ignorant that he was about to become the manager: he accepted it "at the instigation" of nobody, — and Charles Dickens was not in England when he did so: it was read to him after his return, by Forster — and the glowing letter which contains his opinion of it, although directed by him to be shown to myself, was never heard of nor seen by me till printed in Forster's book some thirty years after. When the Drury Lane season began, Macready informed me that he should act the play when he had brought out two others — "The Patrician's Daughter", and "Plighted Troth": having done so, he wrote to me that the former had been unsuccessful in money drawing, and the latter had "smashed his arrangements altogether": but he would still produce my play. I had — in my ignorance of certain symptoms better understood by Macready's professional acquaintance — I had no notion that it was a proper thing, in such a case, to "release him from his promise"; on the contrary, I should have fancied that such a proposal was offensive. Soon after, Macready begged that I would call on him: he said the play had been read to the actors the day before, "and laughed at from beginning to end": on my speaking my mind about this, he explained that the reading had been done by the Prompter, a grotesque person with a red nose and wooden leg, ill at ease in the love scenes, and that he would himself make amends by reading the play next morning — which he did, and very adequately — but apprised me that, in consequence of the state of his mind, harassed by business and various trouble, the principal character must be taken by Mr. Phelps; and again I failed to understand, — what Forster subsequently assured me was plain as the sun at noonday, — that to allow at Macready's theatre any other than Macready to play the principal part in a new piece was suicidal, — and really believed I was meeting his exigencies by accepting the substitution. At the rehearsal, Macready announced that Mr. Phelps was ill, and that he himself would read the part: on the third rehearsal, Mr. Phelps appeared for the first time, and sat in a chair while Macready more than read, rehearsed the part. The next morning Mr. Phelps waylaid me at the stage-door to say, with much emotion, that it never was intended that *he* should be instrumental in the success of a new tragedy, and that Macready would play *Tresham* on the ground that himself, Phelps, was unable to do so. He added that he could not expect me to waive such an advantage,

— but that, if I were prepared to waive it, "he would take ether, sit up all night, and have the words in his memory by next day." I bade him follow me to the green-room, and hear what I decided upon — which was that as Macready had given him the part, he should keep it: this was on a Thursday; he rehearsed on Friday and Saturday — the play being acted the same evening, — *of the fifth day after the "reading" by Macready*. Macready at once wished to reduce the importance of the "play" — as he styled it in the bills — tried to leave out so much of the text, that I baffled him by getting it printed in four and twenty hours, by Moxon's assistance. He wanted me to call it "The Sister!" — and I have before me, while I write, the stage-acting copy, with two lines of his own insertion to avoid the tragical ending — *Tresham* was to announce his intention of going into a monastery! all this, to keep up the belief that Macready, and Macready alone, could produce a veritable "tragedy", unproduced before.

Not a shilling was spent on scenery or dresses — and a striking scene which had been used for the "Patrician's Daughter" did duty a second time. If your critic considers this treatment of the play an instance of the "failure of powerful and experienced actors" to ensure its success, — I can only say that my own opinion was shown by at once breaking off a friendship of many years — a friendship which had a right to be plainly and simply told that the play I had contributed as a proof of it, would, through a change of circumstances, no longer be to my friend's advantage, — all I could possibly care for. Only recently, when by the publication of Macready's journals the extent of his pecuniary embarrassments at that time was made known, could I in a measure understand his motives for such conduct — and less than ever understand why he so strangely disguised and disfigured them. If "applause" means success, the play thus maimed and maltreated was successful enough: it "made way" for Macready's own benefit, and the theatre closed a fortnight after.

Having kept silence for all these years, in spite of repeated explanations, in the style of your critics, that the play "failed in spite of the best endeavours", etc., I hardly wish to revive a very painful matter: on the other hand, — as I have said, my play subsists, and is as open to praise or blame as it was forty-one years ago: is it necessary to search out what somebody or other, — not improbably a jealous adherent of Macready, "the only organizer of theatrical victories", chose to say on the subject? If the characters are "abhorrent" and "inscrutable" — and the language conformable, — they were so when Dickens pronounced upon them, and will be so whenever the critic pleases to re-consider them — which, if he ever has an opportunity of doing, apart from the printed copy, I can assure you is through no notion of mine. This particular experience was sufficient: but the Play is out of my power now; though amateurs and actors may do what they please.

Of course, this being the true story, I should desire that it were told *thus* and no otherwise, if it must be told at all: but *not* as a statement of mine, — the substance of it has been partly stated already by more than one qualified person, and if I have been willing to let the poor matter drop, surely there is no need that it should be gone into now when Macready and his Athenæum upholder are no longer able to speak for themselves: this is just a word to you,

dear Mr. Hill, and may be brought under the notice of your critic if you think proper — but only for the facts — not as a communication for the public.

Yes, thank you, I am in full health, as you wish — and I wish you and Mrs. Hill, I assure you, all the good appropriate to the season. My sister has completely recovered from her illness, and is grateful for your enquiries.

With best regards to Mrs. Hill, and an apology for this long letter, which however, — when once induced to write it, — I could not well shorten, believe me,

Yours truly ever,
Robert Browning.

This letter was followed by one to Mr. Hill, dated December 21, 1884, which continues the history:

My dear Hill, — Your goodness must extend to letting me have the last word — one of sincere thanks. You cannot suppose I doubted for a moment of a goodwill which I have had abundant proof of. I only took the occasion your considerate letter gave me, to tell the simple truth which my forty years' silence is a sign I would only tell on compulsion. I never thought your critic had any less generous motive for alluding to the performance as he did than that which he professes: he doubtless heard the account of the matter which Macready and his intimates gave currency to at the time; and which, being confined for a while to their limited number, I never chose to notice. But of late years I have got to *read*, — not merely *hear*, — of the play's failure "which all the efforts of my friend the great actor could not avert"; and the nonsense of this untruth gets hard to bear. I told you the principal facts in the letter I very hastily wrote: I could, had it been worth while, corroborate them by others in plenty, and refer to the living witnesses — Lady Martin, Mrs. Stirling, and (I believe) Mr. Anderson: it was solely through the admirable loyalty of the two former that . . . a play . . . deprived of every advantage, in the way of scenery, dresses, and rehearsing — proved what Macready himself declared it to be — "a complete success." *So* he sent a servant to tell me "in case there was a call for the author at the end of the act" — to which I replied that the author had been too sick and sorry at the whole treatment of his play to do any such thing. Such a call there truly *was*, and Mr. Anderson had to come forward and "beg the author to come forward if he were in the house — a circumstance of which he was not aware:" whereat the author laughed at him from a box just opposite. . . . I would submit to anybody drawing a conclusion from one or two facts past contradiction, whether that play could have thoroughly failed which was not only not withdrawn at once, but acted three nights in the same week, and, years afterwards, reproduced in his own theatre, during my absence in Italy, by Mr. Phelps — the person most completely aware of the untoward circumstances which stood originally in the way of success. Why not inquire how it happens that, this second time, there was no doubt of the play's doing as well as plays ordinarily do? for those were not the days of a "run."

. . . This "last word" has indeed been the Aristophanic one of fifty syllables: but I have spoken it, relieved myself, and commend all that con-

cerns me to the approved and valued friend of which I am proud to account myself in corresponding friendship,

His truly ever,
Robert Browning.

Browning was always eager to set straight the difficulties between Macready and himself, and William Archer records a letter written by the poet which in a different form reviews the same events:

It would seem, by all the evidence I had afterwards, that I was supposed to myself understand the expediency of begging to withdraw, at least for a time, my own work — saving Macready the imaginary failure to keep a promise to which I never attached particular importance. As so many hints to my dull perception of this, Macready declined to play his part, caused the play to be read in my absence to the actors by a ludicrously incapable person — the result being, as he informed me, "that the play was laughed at from the beginning to the end" — naturally enough, a girl's part being made comical by a red-nosed, one-legged, elderly gentleman [Willmott, the prompter] — then, after proposing to take away from his substitute the opportunity of distinction he had given him (to which I refused my consent), leaving the play to a fate which it somehow managed to escape. Macready was *fuori di se* from the moment when, in pure ignorance of what he was driving at, I acquiesced in his proposal that a serious play of any pretension should appear under his management with any other protagonist than himself. When the more learned subsequently enlightened me a little, I was angry and disinclined to take advice — but it is happily over so long ago! One friendly straightforward word to the effect that what was intended for an advantage would, under circumstances of which I was altogether ignorant, prove the reverse — how easy to have spoken, and what regret it would have spared us both!

A contemporary impression of the drama is to be had in a letter written by Charles Dickens, on November 25, 1842:

Browning's play has thrown me into a perfect passion of sorrow. To say that there is anything in its subject save what is lovely, true, deeply affecting, full of the best emotion, the most earnest feeling, and the most true and tender source of interest, is to say that there is no light in the sun, and no heat in blood. It is full of genius, natural and great thoughts, profound and yet simple and beautiful in its vigor. I know nothing that is so affecting, nothing in any book I have ever read, as *Mildred's* recurrence to that "I was so young — I had no mother." I know no love like it, no passion like it, no moulding of a splendid thing after its conception, like it. And I swear it is a tragedy that MUST be played; and must be played, moreover, by Macready. There are some things I would have changed if I could (they are very slight, mostly broken lines); and I assuredly would have the old servant *begin his tale upon the scene;* and be taken by the throat, or drawn upon, by his master, in its commencement. But the tragedy I never shall forget, or less vividly remember than I do now. And if you tell Browning that I have seen it, tell him that I believe from my soul there is no man living (and not many dead) who could produce such a work.

We get a further picture of the circumstances attending the reading of the play to Phelps and his company from an article in *Blackwood's Magazine*, for 1881, written by Helen Faucit. She states:

> It seems but yesterday that I sat by his [Mr. Elton's] side in the green-room at the reading of Robert Browning's beautiful drama, "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon." As a rule Mr. Macready always read the new plays. But owing, I suppose, to some press of business, the task was entrusted on this occasion to the head prompter, — a clever man in his way, but wholly unfitted to bring out, or even to understand, Mr. Browning's meaning. Consequently, the delicate, subtle lines were twisted, perverted, and sometimes even made ridiculous in his hands. My "cruel father" was a warm admirer of the poet. He sat writhing and indignant, and tried by gentle asides to make me see the real meaning of the verse. But somehow the mischief proved irreparable, for a few of the actors during the rehearsals chose to continue to misunderstand the text, and never took the interest in the play which they must have done had Mr. Macready read it, — for he had great power as a reader. I always thought it was chiefly because of this *contretemps* that a play, so thoroughly dramatic, failed, despite its painful story, to make the great success which was justly its due.

A study of "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" involves a comparison of several acting texts. The play was given its first presentation in London on February 11, 1843. It was acted by the London Browning Society, on May 2, 1885, the same year that it was produced in America by Mr. Lawrence Barrett, who, so it is recorded, omitted the opening scene and the last three of the second act. The Barrett acting edition was issued and annotated by W. J. Rolfe and Miss Hersey.[1]

"A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" was followed, in 1844, by "Colombe's Birthday"; in 1846, by "Luria" and "A Soul's Tragedy"; and, in 1853, by "In a Balcony."

"A Blot in the 'Scutcheon", which has been seen in America since Lawrence Barrett's time, through the enthusiastic energies of Mrs. Sarah Cowell LeMoyne, is one of the least involved of the Browning dramas. It is rich in poetry and interesting in characterization, but it is lacking in originality of story, and wanting in consistency of logical movement. Its structure is somewhat akin to the simple structure of the story of "Francesca da Rimini", although none of the tragic motive exists between *Mildred* and her brother, *Tresham*, that exists between *Francesca* and her husband, *Guido*. One can realize the pathetic appeal of *Mildred*, who is only fourteen, that she had no mother, that she did not know, and so she fell. But it hardly satisfies a consistently minded observer, when the dramatist explains that the whole tragedy of illicit love is due not to any opposition but to a certain reticence and bashfulness on the part of the lover. One is tempted to say, after the hero and heroine die, and are joined in death by the brother, whose family pride has been the undoing of everyone concerned, that the tragedy ceases somewhere to be tragedy in the deep sense of the word, and that the "casualty list" is entirely unjustified by the smallness of the obstacle.

Had Browning thoroughly realized his dramatic opportunities, he would have made more out of that dramatic situation where *Mertoun* goes to ask for the hand of

[1] The stage history of "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" is contained in W. Davenport Adams's "Dictionary of the Drama."

Mildred from her brother; for here is a conflict of emotion well worthy of dramatic treatment — *Mertoun* asking for the hand of a woman already his mistress, and *Tresham* welcoming into his family a man who has already done it so much ill. The tragedy is too swift in its outward motivation, therefore, to take advantage of such a poignant situation.

Subjected to a careful analysis of its dramatic elements, "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" does not meet the requirements of great drama. It shows Browning too much addicted to those technical tricks of thought, resulting in sentences which, even though involved, constitute poetry and create style; yet which are hardly effective when uttered by the actor. His is a type of dramatic writing filled with spiritualized thought which does so much to choke dramatic action, and to make of something which is noble poetry, almost a still-born drama.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

A TRAGEDY
IN THREE ACTS

By ROBERT BROWNING

PERSONS

Mildred Tresham	Miss Helen Faucit
Guendolen Tresham	Mrs. Stirling
Thorold, Lord Tresham	Mr. Phelps
Austin Tresham	Mr. Hudson
Henry, Earl Mertoun	Mr. Anderson
Gerard	Mr. G. Bennett

Other retainers of Lord Tresham

Time, 17—

Given at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London, February 11, 1843.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

ACT I

SCENE FIRST. — *The interior of a lodge in* LORD TRESHAM'S *park. Many* RETAINERS *crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion.* GERARD, *the warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1ST RETAINER. Ay, do! push, friends, and then you'll push down me!
— What for? Does any hear a runner's foot
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!

GERARD. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

2ND RETAINER. Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful,
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham through the countryside,
Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand?

GERARD. What then?

2ND RETAINER. What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if she meets
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her through her forest walks,
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues
To lay his heart and house and broad lands too
At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side — "there's the Earl," say I —
"What then?" say you!

3RD RETAINER. I'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred swim
Over the falls and gain the river!

GERARD. Ralph,
Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks?

4TH RETAINER. Let Gerard be!
He's coarse-grained, like his carved black crossbow stock.
Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!
Well done, now — is not this beginning, now,
To purpose?

1ST RETAINER. Our retainers look as fine —
That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright?

4TH RETAINER. He's only bowing, fool!
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

1ST RETAINER. That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade!

3RD RETAINER. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace
Our family, if I, for instance, stood —

In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left? —

GERARD. — With Hugh
The logman for supporter, in his right
The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!

3RD RETAINER. Out on you, crab! What next, what next? The Earl!

1ST RETAINER. Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six —
They paw the ground — Ah Walter! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel!

6TH RETAINER. Ay — ay!
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst
So cunningly? — then, Philip, mark this further;
No leg has he to stand on!

1ST RETAINER. No? That's comfort.

2ND RETAINER. Peace, Cook! The Earl descends. Well, Gerard, see
The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
Has got a starrier eye.

3RD RETAINER. His eyes are blue:
But leave my hawks alone!

4TH RETAINER. So young, and yet
So tall and shapely!

5TH RETAINER. Here's Lord Tresham's self!
There now — there's what a nobleman should be!
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
A House's head.

2ND RETAINER. But you'd not have a boy
— And what's the Earl beside? — possess too soon
That stateliness?

1ST RETAINER. Our master takes his hand —
Richard and his white staff are on the move —
Back fall our people — (tsh! — there's Timothy
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties,
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)
— At last I see our lord's back and his friend's;
And the whole beautiful bright company
Close round them — in they go!
[*Jumping down from the window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs*]
Good health, long life,
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

6TH RETAINER. My father drove his father first to court,
After his marriage day — ay, did he!

2ND RETAINER. God bless
Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!
Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

GERARD. Drink, my boys!
Don't mind me — all's not right about me — drink!

2ND RETAINER. [*Aside*] He's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!
[*To* GERARD] Remember that the Earl returns this way.

GERARD. That way?

2ND RETAINER. Just so.

GERARD. Then my way's here. [*Goes*]

2ND RETAINER. Old Gerard
Will die soon — mind, I said it! He was used
To care about the pitifullest thing
That touched the House's honour, not an eye
But his could see wherein: and on a cause
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
Such point decorous, and such square by rule —
He knew such niceties, no herald more:
And now — you see his humour: die he will!

[1ST] RETAINER. God help him! Who's for the great servants'-hall
To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow
Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3RD RETAINER. I! —

4TH RETAINER. I! —
Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
Some hint of how the parley goes inside!
Prosperity to the great House once more!
Here's the last drop!

1ST RETAINER. Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE SECOND. — *A Saloon in the Mansion.*

[*Enter* LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, *and* GUENDOLEN]

TRESHAM. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
— Noble among the noblest in itself,
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
New price and lustre, — (as that gem you wear,
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
Seems to re-kindle at the core) — your name
Would win you welcome! —

MERTOUN. Thanks!

TRESHAM. — But add to that,
The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both
Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now — add these, and you must grant
One favour more, nor that the least, — to think
The welcome I should give; — 'tis given! My lord,
My only brother, Austin: he's the king's.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen — betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.

MERTOUN. I thank you — less
For the expressed commendings which your seal,
And only that, authenticates — forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
I love your sister — as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
Rank, all the world thinks me, they're yours, you know,
To hold or part with, at your choice — but grant
My true self, me without a rood of land,
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?

GUENDOLEN. [*Apart to* AUSTIN] Why, this is loving, Austin!

AUSTIN. He's so young!

GUENDOLEN. Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise
He never had obtained an entrance here,
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

AUSTIN. Hush!
He reddens.

GUENDOLEN. Mark him, Austin; that's true love!
Ours must begin again.

TRESHAM. We'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.

MERTOUN. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?

TRESHAM. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I hope it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

MERTOUN. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game: the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours, — or else
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And — and then . . . I have seen her.

GUENDOLEN. [*Aside to* AUSTIN] Note that mode
Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,

He, having eyes, did see her! You had said —
"On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
"Observed a red, where red should not have been,
"Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future!
TRESHAM. What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems —
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are — how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred — thus
We brothers talk!
MERTOUN. I thank you.
TRESHAM. In a word,
Control's not for this lady; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
Can I say more?
MERTOUN. No more — thanks, thanks — no more!
TRESHAM. This matter then discussed . . .
MERTOUN. — We'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech
To you would wander — as it must not do,
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!
TRESHAM. With less regret 'tis suffered, that again
We meet, I hope, so shortly.
MERTOUN. We? again? —
Ah, yes, forgive me — when shall . . . you will crown
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you — and her.
TRESHAM. So soon
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal — howsoe'er they lean —
A messenger shall bring you the result.
MERTOUN. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.
TRESHAM. So may it prove!
MERTOUN. You, lady, you, sir, take
My humble salutation!
GUENDOLEN AND AUSTIN. Thanks!
TRESHAM. Within there!

[*Servants enter.* TRESHAM *conducts* MERTOUN *to the door. Meantime* AUSTIN *remarks,*]

Well,
Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!
Why, he makes sure of her — "do you say, yes —
"She'll not say, no," — what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,
"For Heaven's sake urge this on her — put in this —
"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing, —
"Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
"And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)
"Only let her accept me, and do you
"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"
GUENDOLEN. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame
I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste!
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl's a fool.
AUSTIN. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!
TRESHAM [*returning*]. Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady's first!

How seems he? — seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?
A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,
As you will never! come — the Earl?

GUENDOLEN. He's young.

TRESHAM. What's she? an infant save in heart and brain.
Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! and you . . .
Austin, how old is she?

GUENDOLEN. There's tact for you!
I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .

TRESHAM Well?

GUENDOLEN. — With lacking wit.

TRESHAM. He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?

GUENDOLEN. In standing straighter than the steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangue,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,
"Your cousin there will do me detriment
"He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,
"In my old name and fame — be sure he'll leave
"My Mildred, when his best account of me
"Is ended, in full confidence I wear
"My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

TRESHAM. . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
Of me and my demerits." You are right!
He should have said what now I say for him.
Yon golden creature, will you help us all?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
— You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,
All three of us: she's in the library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!

GUENDOLEN. Austin, how we must —!

TRESHAM. Must what? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!
I challenge you!

GUENDOLEN. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.

TRESHAM. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him — say, to-morrow —
Next day at furthest.

GUENDOLEN. Ne'er instruct me!

TRESHAM. Come!
— He's out of your good graces, since forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections! You're for the composed
Manly assured becoming confidence!
— Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .
I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE THIRD. — MILDRED'S *chamber. A painted window overlooks the park.*

[MILDRED *and* GUENDOLEN]

GUENDOLEN. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left
Our talkers in the library, and climbed
The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you, — I have not dared . . .
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell
— Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most
Firm-rooted heresy — your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were gray instead of blue —
I think I brought him to contrition! — Well,
I have not done such things, (all to deserve
A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly.

MILDRED. Guendolen!
What have I done? what could suggest . . .

GUENDOLEN. There, there!
Do I not comprehend you'd be alone

To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's
Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses —
And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you
Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have!
Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?
Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,
Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take —
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?
Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!

MILDRED. My brother —
Did he . . . you said that he received him well?

GUENDOLEN. If I said only "well" I said not much.
Oh, stay — which brother?

MILDRED. Thorold! who — who else?

GUENDOLEN. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half, —
Nay, hear me out — with us he's even gentler
Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying — no mere talk:
And in the world, the court, if men would cite
The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips.
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;
Is he content?

MILDRED. You wrong him, Guendolen.

GUENDOLEN. He's proud, confess; so proud with brooding o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .

MILDRED. Dear Guendolen, 'tis late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

GUENDOLEN. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .

MILDRED. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun?

GUENDOLEN. Not your brother; therefore,
Not the whole world.

MILDRED. I am weary, Guendolen.
Bear with me!

GUENDOLEN. I am foolish.

MILDRED. Oh no, kind!
But I would rest.

GUENDOLEN. Good night and rest to you!
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair?

MILDRED. Brown hair.

GUENDOLEN. Brown? why, it *is* brown: how could you know that?

MILDRED. How? did not you — Oh, Austin 'twas, declared
His hair was light, not brown — my head! — and look,
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,
Good night!

GUENDOLEN. Forgive me — sleep the soundlier for me!

[*Going, she turns suddenly*]

Mildred!
Perdition! all's discovered! Thorold finds
— That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still — to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance! [*Goes*]

MILDRED. Is she — can she be really gone at last?
My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.

[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the purple pane*]

There!

[*She returns to the seat in front*]

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride!
Too late! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late: 'twill sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon.
[*A noise without*]
The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the snake
Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?

[*The window opens softly. A low voice sings*]

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest;
And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the surest:
And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble:
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble!

[*A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window*]

And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights were moonless,
"Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak tuneless,
"If you loved me not!" And I who — (ah, for words of flame!) adore her,
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her —

[*He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her*]

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me!

[*The* Earl *throws off his slouched hat and long cloak*]

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved!

Mildred. Sit, Henry — do not take my hand!

Mertoun. 'Tis mine.
The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.

Mildred. What begins now?

Mertoun. Happiness
Such as the world contains not.

Mildred. That is it.
Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses: we — do we
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine
Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,
And so familiar now; this will not be!

Mertoun. Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face?
Compelled myself — if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as — what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused
With rain and stormy flaw — and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the East?
When I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship you,
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be"?

Mildred. Sin has surprised us, so will punishment.

Mertoun. No — me alone, who sinned alone!

Mildred. The night
You likened our past life to — was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mertoun. Of your life
I spoke — what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me? — you
It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon. 'Twas day with me —
Perpetual dawn with me.

Mildred. Come what, come will,
You have been happy: take my hand!

Mertoun [*after a pause*]. How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold —
Shall I say, haughty man?

Mildred. They told me all.
I know all.

MERTOUN. It will soon be over.
MILDRED. Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live through
And say, "'tis over"? Is our meeting over?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love — with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow — with lips
Which make believe that when they strive to form
Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip —
With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
Ah, God, some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
The love, the shame, and the despair — with them.
Round me aghast as round some cursed fount
That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace
That's gone from me — gone once, and gone for ever!
MERTOUN. Mildred, my honour is your own. I'll share
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.
A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.
MILDRED. I'll meet their faces, Henry!
MERTOUN. When? to-morrow!
Get done with it!
MILDRED. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!
Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner. — How you must
Despise me!
MERTOUN. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted — still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me, — first pace
The chamber with me — once again — now, say
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
— Contempt for you in! I will pluck it off
And cast it from me! — but no — no, you'll not
Repeat that? — will you, Mildred, repeat that?
MILDRED. Dear Henry!
MERTOUN. I was scarce a boy — e'en now
What am I more? And you were infantine
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream —
You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of — I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel you not
That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,
Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
— That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt — your own
Or other's guilt — the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize — (I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you!)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul

To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath — if you
Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts —
If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish — (I was ignorant of even
My own desires — what then were you?) if sorrow —
Sin — if the end came — must I now renounce
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
Contempt were all of this!

MILDRED. Do you believe . . .
Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you — you believe
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
The past. We'll love on; you will love me still.

MERTOUN. Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast —
Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!
Mildred, I love you and you love me.

MILDRED. Go!
Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

MERTOUN. This is not our last meeting?

MILDRED. One night more.

MERTOUN. And then — think, then!

MILDRED. Then, no sweet courtship-days,
No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

MERTOUN. How else should love's perfected noontide follow?
All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

MILDRED. So may it be! but —
You are cautious, Love?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

MERTOUN. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed
To-morrow night?

MILDRED. Farewell! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore?
His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf
Receives him; now the moonlight as he runs
Embraces him — but he must go — is gone.
Ah, once again he turns — thanks, thanks, my Love!
He's gone. Oh, I'll believe him every word!
I was so young, I loved him so, I had
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
There may be pardon yet: all's doubt beyond.
Surely the bitterness of death is past.

ACT II

SCENE. — *The Library*

[*Enter* LORD TRESHAM, *hastily*]

TRESHAM. This way! In, Gerard, quick!
[*As* GERARD *enters*, TRESHAM *secures the door*]
Now speak! or, wait —
I'll bid you speak directly.
[*Seats himself*]
Now repeat
Firmly and circumstantially the tale
You just now told me; it eludes me; either
I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me. How long have you lived here?
Here in my house, your father kept our woods
Before you?

GERARD. — As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating, sixty years almost,
Your bread.

TRESHAM. Yes, yes. You ever were of all
The servants in my father's house, I know,
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

GERARD. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .

TRESHAM. Since when?

GERARD. At least
A month — each midnight has some man access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.
TRESHAM. Tush, "access" —
No wide words like "access" to me!
GERARD. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .
TRESHAM. The last great yew-tree?
GERARD. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then he . . .
TRESHAM. Quick!
GERARD. Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,
— I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think — for this I do not vouch — a line
That reaches to the lady's casement —
TRESHAM. — Which
He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached, — to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not enter?
Gerard?
GERARD. There is a lamp that's full i' the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .
TRESHAM. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?
GERARD. — Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane — a small dark-blue pane; he waits
For that among the boughs: at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .
TRESHAM. — And stay?
GERARD. An hour, two hours.
TRESHAM. And this you saw
Once? — twice? — quick!
GERARD. Twenty times.
TRESHAM. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?
GERARD. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.
TRESHAM. Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?
GERARD. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.
TRESHAM [*after a pause*]. You have no cause
— Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?
GERARD. Oh, my lord, only once — let me this once
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that — fire if I turned
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire
If down I flung myself and strove to die.
The lady could not have been seven years old
When I was trusted to conduct her safe
Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
Within a month. She ever had a smile
To greet me with — she . . . if it could undo
What's done, to lop each limb from off this trunk . . .
All that is foolish talk, not fit for you —
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed
To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts
What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed
Either I must confess to you, or die:
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.
TRESHAM. No —
No, Gerard!
GERARD. Let me go!
TRESHAM. A man, you say:
What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What dress?
GERARD. A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak
Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;
But I should judge him young: no hind, be sure!
TRESHAM. Why?
GERARD. He is ever armed: his sword projects

Beneath the cloak.
TRESHAM. Gerard — I will not say
No word, no breath of this!
GERARD. Thanks, thanks, my lord! [*Goes*]
TRESHAM [*paces the room. After a pause*]. Oh, thought's absurd! — as with some monstrous fact
Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give
Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
The waters and the green delights of earth,
The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact —
Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
And yield my reason up, inadequate
To reconcile what yet I do behold —
Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day outside:
This is my library, and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
Between his knees to question him: and here
Gerard our gray retainer, — as he says,
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age, —
Has told a story — I am to believe!
That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,
Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
Would she, or could she, err — much less, confound
All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven
Keep me within its hand! — I will sit here
Until thought settle and I see my course.
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!
[*As he sinks his head between his arms on the table,* GUENDOLEN'S *voice is heard at the door*]
GUENDOLEN. Lord Tresham! [*She knocks*] Is Lord Tresham there?
[TRESHAM, *hastily turning, pulls down the first book above him and opens it*]
TRESHAM. Come in! [*She enters*] Ha, Guendolen! — good morning.
GUENDOLEN. Nothing more?
TRESHAM. What should I say more?
GUENDOLEN. Pleasant question! more?
This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"
"The Earl" — whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!
TRESHAM. Who, I?
You laugh at me.
GUENDOLEN. Has what I'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show some blot
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
Than Arthur's time?
TRESHAM. When left you Mildred's chamber?
GUENDOLEN. Oh, late enough, I told you! The main thing
To ask is, how I left her chamber, — sure,
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .
TRESHAM. Send her here!
GUENDOLEN. Thorold?
TRESHAM. I mean — acquaint her, Guendolen,
— But mildly!
GUENDOLEN. Mildly?
TRESHAM. Ah, you guessed aright!
I am not well: there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure —
That is, at once! here in the library!
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say, found —
And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come — and instantly!
GUENDOLEN. I'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!
TRESHAM. Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call, — with Austin, if you choose, —
In the adjoining gallery! There, go!
[GUENDOLEN *goes*]
Another lesson to me! You might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise.
If you had told me yesterday, "There's one
"You needs must circumvent and practise with,
"Entrap by policies, if you would worm

"The truth out: and that one is — Mildred!" There,
There — reasoning is thrown away on it!
Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove
That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!
Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to say.
Or do, or think. Force on me but the first
Abomination, — then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them.

[*Enter* MILDRED]

MILDRED. What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That book?
That's Latin surely.

TRESHAM. Mildred, here's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)
"Love conquers all things." What love conquers them?
What love should you esteem — best love?

MILDRED. True love.

TRESHAM. I mean, and should have said, whose love is best
Of all that love or that profess to love?

MILDRED. The list's so long: there's father's, mother's, husband's . . .

TRESHAM. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
For a sole sister must exceed them all.
For see now, only see! there's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold
Of other loves — no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught
That keeps life — never tended her, instructed,
Enriched her — so, your love can claim no right
O'er her save pure love's claim: that's what I call
Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh, yes — with age, respect comes, and your worth
Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem:
— Much head these make against the newcomer!
The startling apparition, the strange youth —
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
. . . Her soul, that is, — the sister's soul! With her
'Twas winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
"Arise and come away!" Come whither? — far
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights! All which he knows before,
Has calculated on so long ago!
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be place for it,
— I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's love in its unworldliness.

MILDRED. What is this for?

TRESHAM. This, Mildred, is it for!
Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
That's one of many points my haste left out —
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:
So close you live and yet so far apart!
And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
The sweet and palpitating mystery
That makes her sacred? You — for you I mean,
Shall I speak, shall I not speak?

MILDRED. Speak!

TRESHAM. I will.
Is there a story men could — any man
Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?

I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip.
Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve
The world — the world of better men than I,
And women such as I suppose you. Speak!
[*After a pause*] Not speak? Explain then! Clear it up then! Move
Some of the miserable weight away
That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?
[*After a pause*] Is there a gallant that has night by night
Admittance to your chamber?
[*After a pause*] Then, his name!
Till now, I only had a thought for you:
But now, — his name!

MILDRED. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be! 'T is nought to say that I'll endure
And bless you, — that my spirit yearns to purge
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:
But do not plunge me into other guilt!
Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

TRESHAM. Then judge yourself! How should I act? Pronounce!

MILDRED. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!
To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,
Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!
'Twere easily arranged for me: but you —
What would become of you?

TRESHAM. And what will now
Become of me? I'll hide your shame and mine
From every eye; the dead must heave their hearts
Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed
Your paramour above our mother's tomb;
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
We too will somehow wear this one day out:
But with to-morrow hastens here — the Earl!
The youth without suspicion . . . face can come
From Heaven, and heart from . . . whence proceed such hearts?
I have despatched last night at your command
A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow — here — thus much is said; the rest
Is understood as if 'twere written down —
"His suit finds favour in your eyes." Now dictate
This morning's letter that shall countermand
Last night's — do dictate that!

MILDRED. But, Thorold — if
I will receive him as I said?

TRESHAM. The Earl?

MILDRED. I will receive him.

TRESHAM [*starting up*]. Ho there! Guendolen!

[GUENDOLEN *and* AUSTIN *enter*]

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!
The woman there!

AUSTIN AND GUENDOLEN. How? Mildred?

TRESHAM. Mildred once!
Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
— I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which holds
You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams — never one like her!
No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!
Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
Into — what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
Know her!

GUENDOLEN. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!

Thorold — she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands
Rigid as stone and whiter!
TRESHAM. You have heard . . .
GUENDOLEN. Too much! You must proceed no further.
MILDRED. Yes —
Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!
TRESHAM. All is truth,
She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,
All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance — and one word of hers,
The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my resolve.
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day forth,
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
It were not so impossible to bear.
But this — that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
Of love with the successful gallant there,
She calmly bids me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that 's chaste and good and pure,
— Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
— That she'll receive Lord Mertoun — (her own phrase) —
This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,
Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,
"Talk not to me of torture — I'll betray
"No comrade I've pledged faith to!" — you have heard
Of wretched women — all but Mildreds — tied
By wild illicit ties to losels vile
You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply
"Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
"In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
"Repute or friends?" — and you have felt your heart
Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
As to so many friends; bad as you please,
You've felt they were God's men and women still,
So, not to be disowned by you. But she
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,
I curse her to her face before you all.
Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right
To both! It hears me now — shall judge her then!
[*As* MILDRED *faints and falls*, TRESHAM *rushes out*]
AUSTIN. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you!
GUENDOLEN. We?
What, and leave Mildred? We? Why, where's my place
But by her side, and where yours but by mine?
Mildred — one word! Only look at me, then!
AUSTIN. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.
She is unworthy to behold . . .
GUENDOLEN. Us two?
If you spoke on reflection, and if I
Approved your speech — if you (to put the thing
At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make
The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw
Regard to others of its right or wrong,
— If with a death-white woman you can help,
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
You left her — or if I, her cousin, friend
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,
"I'd serve you if I could," should now face round
And say, "Ah, that's only to signify
"I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself:
"So long as fifty eyes await the turn
"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,

"I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need —
"When every tongue is praising you, I'll join
"The praisers' chorus — when you're hemmed about
"With lives between you and detraction — lives
"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
"Their worship throws about you, — then indeed,
"Who'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so
We said, and so we did, — not Mildred there
Would be unworthy to behold us both,
But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by — by — your meanest dog,
Which, if that sword were broken in your face
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
— Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain
Your side, go off with you and all your shame
To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,
Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred, — here's
Your brother says he does not believe half —
No, nor half that — of all he heard! He says,
Look up and take his hand!

AUSTIN. Look up and take
My hand, dear Mildred!

MILDRED. I — I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold — and I had
No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.

GUENDOLEN. Mildred!

MILDRED. Require no further! Did I dream
That I could palliate what is done? All's true.
Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.
I thought that Thorold told you.

GUENDOLEN. What is this?
Where start you to?

MILDRED. Oh, Austin, loosen me!
You heard the whole of it — your eyes were worse,
In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
You stay to execute his sentence, loose
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?

GUENDOLEN. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait
Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
How can we do it if we are not by?
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!
One spirit to command, and one to love
And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it — why, the world
Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
By just such a beginning!

MILDRED. I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again.

GUENDOLEN. Let go her hand now, Austin!
Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think
On the world's seemings and realities,
Until I call you. [AUSTIN *goes*]

MILDRED. No — I cannot weep.
No more tears from this brain — no sleep — no tears!
O Guendolen, I love you!

GUENDOLEN. Yes: and "love"
Is a short word that says so very much!
It says that you confide in me.

MILDRED. Confide!

GUENDOLEN. Your lover's name, then! I've so much to learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf!

MILDRED. My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.

GUENDOLEN. At least
He is your lover? and you love him too?

MILDRED. Ah, do you ask me that? — but I am fallen
So low!

GUENDOLEN. You love him still, then?

MILDRED. My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, "I was so young —
"I had no mother, and I loved him so!"

And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust him my soul in sleep.

GUENDOLEN. How could you let us
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?

MILDRED. There is a cloud around me.

GUENDOLEN. But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this?

MILDRED. I say there is a cloud . . .

GUENDOLEN. No cloud to me!
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

MILDRED. What maddest fancy . . .

GUENDOLEN [*calling aloud*]. Austin! (spare your pains —
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep) —

MILDRED. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!
Have I confided in you . . .

GUENDOLEN. Just for this!
Austin! — Oh, not to guess it at the first!
But I did guess it — that is, I divined,
Felt by an instinct how it was: why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap
Of sins which had been irredeemable?
I felt they were not yours — what other way
Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine!

MILDRED. If you would see me die before his face . . .

GUENDOLEN. I'd hold my peace! And if the Earl returns
To-night?

MILDRED. Ah Heaven, he's lost!

GUENDOLEN. I thought so. Austin!

[*Enter* AUSTIN]

Oh, where have you been hiding?

AUSTIN. Thorold's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
O' the beech-wood.

GUENDOLEN. Gone? All thwarts us.

MILDRED. Thorold too?

GUENDOLEN. I have thought. First lead this Mildred to her room.
Go on the other side; and then we'll seek
Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the way,
The greatest comfort in the world. You said
There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet,
He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come!

ACT III

SCENE FIRST. — *The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under* MILDRED'S *window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

[*Enter* TRESHAM *through the trees*]

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath — the orchard — I have traversed glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
Their will no longer: do your will with me!
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
On many a beauty's wimple — would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here? What must I do?

[*A bell strikes*] A bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
— Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enter* MERTOUN *cloaked as before*]

MERTOUN. Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.

[*The light is placed above in the purple pane*]

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
I never saw it lovelier than now
It rises for the last time. If it sets,
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue,* TRESHAM *arrests his arm*]

Unhand me — peasant, by your grasp! Here's gold.
'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.

TRESHAM. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!
Out of the shadow!

MERTOUN. I am armed, fool!

TRESHAM. Yes,
Or no? You'll come into the light, or no?
My hand is on your throat — refuse! —

MERTOUN. That voice!
Where have I heard . . . no — that was mild and slow.
I'll come with you. [*They advance*]

TRESHAM. You're armed: that's well. Declare
Your name: who are you?

MERTOUN. (Tresham! — she is lost!)

TRESHAM. Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself
Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they're detected, still your kind has looked!
The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man.
Your name!

MERTOUN. I do conjure Lord Tresham — ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail —
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name! As heaven's above, his future weal
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!
I read your white inexorable face.
Know me, Lord Tresham!

[*He throws off his disguises*]

TRESHAM. Mertoun!

[*After a pause*] Draw now!

MERTOUN. Hear me
But speak first!

TRESHAM. Not one least word on your life!
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you live
And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 'twas you
Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.
We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief — a life like yours is still
Impossible. Now draw!

MERTOUN. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing — for your sake,
And most, for her sake!

TRESHAM. Ha ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,
How must one rouse his ire? A blow? — that's pride
No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one not?

Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
Into his face! Come! Which, or all of these?

MERTOUN. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be judge!
Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!

[He draws and, after a few passes, falls]

TRESHAM. You are not hurt?

MERTOUN. You'll hear me now!

TRESHAM. But rise!

MERTOUN. Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me now!"
And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow man,
But — I suppose — the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?

TRESHAM. Not hurt? It cannot be!
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned
My thrusts? Hurt where?

MERTOUN. My lord —

TRESHAM. How young he is!

MERTOUN. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!
That when I die before you presently, —

TRESHAM. Can you stay here till I return with help?

MERTOUN. Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong and knew it not —
Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way
To right you than I took: my life — you feel
How less than nothing were the giving you
The life you've taken! But I thought my way
The better — only for your sake and hers:
And as you have decided otherwise,
Would I had an infinity of lives
To offer you! Now say — instruct me — think!
Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,
Eke out my reparation? Oh think — think!
For I must wring a partial — dare I say,
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

TRESHAM. I do
Forgive you.

MERTOUN. Wait and ponder that great word!
Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of — Mildred!

TRESHAM. Mertoun, haste
And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you
Should tell me for a novelty you're young,
Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.
Be but your pardon ample as my own!

MERTOUN. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop
Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
Why, 'twas my very fear of you, my love
Of you — (what passion like a boy's for one
Like you?) — that ruined me! I dreamed of you —
You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
To knit myself to you: but I was young,
And your surpassing reputation kept me
So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
With less of love, my glorious yesterday
Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
Had taken place perchance six months ago.
Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
Let me look up into your face; I feel
'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
Where? where?

[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp]

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That's bleeding fast away! I'll live — must live, —
There, if you'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham — oh, had you but heard!
Had you but heard! What right was yours to set
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,

And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
"All had gone otherwise"? We've sinned and die:
Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you'll die,
And God will judge you.

TRESHAM. Yes, be satisfied!
That process is begun.

MERTOUN. And she sits there
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her —
You, not another — say, I saw him die
As he breathed this, "I love her" — you don't know
What those three small words mean! Say; loving her
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
Dear Mildred! 'tis so easy, and you'll 'scape
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you? — heartless men shall have my heart,
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
Aware, perhaps, of every blow — oh God! —
Upon those lips — yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave
Their honourable world to them! For God
We're good enough, though the world casts us out. [*A whistle is heard*]

TRESHAM. Ho, Gerard!

[*Enter* GERARD, AUSTIN *and* GUENDOLEN, *with lights*]

No one speak! You see what's done.
I cannot bear another voice.

MERTOUN. There's light —
Light all about me, and I move to it,
Tresham, did I not tell you — did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?

TRESHAM. I will bear those words to her.

MERTOUN. Now?

TRESHAM. Now. Lift you the body, and leave me
The head.

[*As they have half raised* MERTOUN, *he turns suddenly*]

MERTOUN. I knew they turned me: turn me not from her!
There! stay you! there! [*Dies*]

GUENDOLEN [*after a pause*]. Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.

TRESHAM. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,
And only I, see Mildred.

GUENDOLEN. She will die.

TRESHAM. Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?
Why, Austin's with you!

AUSTIN. Had we but arrived
Before you fought!

TRESHAM. There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him — the boy! I'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard — thus!
Now bear him on before me.

AUSTIN. Whither bear him?

TRESHAM. Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there next,
We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of* MERTOUN]

Will she die, Guendolen?

GUENDOLEN. Where are you taking me?

TRESHAM. He fell just here.
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
— You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste —
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast

As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
You turn your head: and I then? —

GUENDOLEN. What is done
Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
Bear up against this burden: more remains
To set the neck to!

TRESHAM. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell — farewell!

SCENE SECOND. — MILDRED'S *chamber.*

[MILDRED *alone*]

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity, — you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
Oh, 'tis not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not? — fails
Just this first night out of so many nights?
Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,
As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love
No more — contrive no thousand happy ways
To hide love from the loveless, any more.
I think I might have urged some little point
In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless
For the least hint of a defence: but no,
The first shame over, all that would might fall.
No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover — oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
Forsakes me: only Henry's left me — left?
When I have lost him, for he does not come,
And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break up
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!

TRESHAM [*without*]. Mildred!

MILDRED. Come in! Heaven hears me!

[*Enter* TRESHAM] You? alone?
Oh, no more cursing!

TRESHAM. Mildred, I must sit.
There — you sit!

MILDRED. Say it, Thorold — do not look
The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh, speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!

TRESHAM. My thought?

MILDRED. All of it!

TRESHAM. How we waded — years ago —
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came —
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!
Mildred, —

MILDRED. You call me kindlier by my name
Than even yesterday: what is in that?

TRESHAM. It weighs so much upon my mind that I
This morning took an office not my own!
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,
Content or not, at every little thing

That touches you. I may with a wrung heart
Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
Will you forgive me?
MILDRED. Thorold? do you mock?
Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!
TRESHAM. Forgive me, Mildred! — are you silent, Sweet?
MILDRED [*starting up*]. Why does not Henry Mertoun come to-night?
Are you, too, silent?
[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty*]
Ah, this speaks for you!
You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
What is it I must pardon? This and all?
Well, I do pardon you — I think I do.
Thorold, how very wretched you must be!
TRESHAM. He bade me tell you . . .
MILDRED. What I do forbid
Your utterance of! So much that you may tell
And will not — how you murdered him . . . but, no!
You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there: must I say
"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.
TRESHAM. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:
Of this last deed Another's judge; whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.
MILDRED. Oh, true! There's nought for me to pardon! True!
You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
Death makes me sure of him forever! You
Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,
And take my answer — not in words, but reading
Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .
TRESHAM. Death? You are dying too? Well said
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die:
But she was sure of it.
MILDRED. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .
TRESHAM. Him you loved:
And me?
MILDRED. Ah, Thorold! Was 't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me — whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
— Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me! — you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair —
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honour bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes — you struck him down!
TRESHAM. No! No!
Had I but heard him — had I let him speak
Half the truth — less — had I looked long on him
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it: I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable.
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;
I would not glance: my punishment's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you — say on —
You curse me?
MILDRED. As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven, — I — forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls! [*Falls on his neck*]
There! Do not think too much upon the past!
The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud

While it stood up between my friend and you;
You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is that
So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know;
I may dispose of it: I give it you!
It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry! [*Dies*]

TRESHAM. I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad
In thy full gladness!

GUENDOLEN [*without*]. Mildred! Tresham!

[*Entering with* AUSTIN] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!
That's well.

TRESHAM. Oh, better far than that!

GUENDOLEN. She's dead!
Let me unlock her arms!

TRESHAM. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:
You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

AUSTIN. Leave her
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?

GUENDOLEN. White
As she, and whiter! Austin! quick — this side!

AUSTIN. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;
Both lips, where they're not bitten through, are black:
Speak, dearest Thorold!

TRESHAM. Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall
But for you, Austin, I believe! — there, there,
'Twill pass away soon! — ah, — I had forgotten:
I am dying.

GUENDOLEN. Thorold — Thorold — why was this?

TRESHAM. I said, just as I drank the poison off,
The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me.
There are blind ways provided, the foredone
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal: I am through —
Just through!

GUENDOLEN. Don't leave him, Austin! Death is close.

TRESHAM. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.
I see you, Austin — feel you: here's my hand,
Put yours in it — you, Guendolen, yours too!
You're lord and lady now — you're Treshams; name
And fame are yours: you hold our 'scutcheon up.
Austin, no blot on it! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away: the first blot came
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All's gules again: no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn!

AUSTIN. No blot shall come!

TRESHAM. I said that: yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me! [*Dies*]

GUENDOLEN [*letting fall the pulseless arm*]. Ah, Thorold, we can but — remember you!

THE TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN

(1863)

By Tom Taylor

TOM TAYLOR

(1817–1880)

Tom Taylor represents all the glaring defects of the dramatists of the Victorian era. He is the type of English playwright who readily acceded to the line of least resistance and who, taking the public taste of his time as criterion, lowered his abilities in order to meet the popular demand.

In 1869, he wrote for *Every Saturday* an article on "Some Thoughts on the English Stage"; and in this article, which criticised the defects and weaknesses of the current theatre, he unconsciously illustrated exactly why his own dramas were replete with those flimsy characteristics he criticised in others. Even in that period they talked of the "palmy days" of acting, and deplored what they thought was the decline of the traditions of Garrick, Kean, and Kemble, and what they suspected were the waning powers of Macready. There were those conservatives who regarded, with tremendous scepticism, the freeing of the theatres. Undoubtedly, the English stage of the 40's and 50's was dominated by a wildcat competition, where comedy — bordering on farce — and deep-dyed melodrama flourished, and improbable romance was held above subtlety of characterization. As Taylor wrote:

> So long as the patent theatres survived, there was a home in them for artificial comedy as for formal tragedy, and a body of actors trained to represent both with more or less finish and completeness. But the same influences, call them popular or democratic if you will, which were gradually modifying manners, political opinions and literature, were at work in the theatre, both to sap theatrical privilege and to new-mould theatrical amusements. The patents were broken down; all theatres were opened to all kinds of entertainments; actors became scattered; and whatever of artificial or stately in stage art had been maintained by the barriers of privilege, or the influences of tradition, began to melt away, and make room for ways of acting and forms of entertainment bearing a more popular impress.

Such condition turned more minds than that of Tom Taylor on the excellencies of the French stage of this time, in comparison with the dramatic performances then holding in London. He wrote of French audiences, and their ability to judge competently the merits of a drama, in the same terms that American critics — during the height of the régime of the Theatrical Trust — talked of American performances and audiences in comparison with audiences and performances in London. This devotion to the French drama was the undoing of Tom Taylor, as it was of many of his contemporaries. For some time, the English theatre was the French theatre reduced to the lowest terms of translation.

Tom Taylor was born at Bishop-Wearmouth, a suburb of Sunderland, on October 19, 1817. His father was self-educated, and rose to financial prominence

through his brewery business. It was probably from his mother that young Tom inherited much of his sharpness of wit and his intellectual ability. He was educated at the Grange, in Sunderland, and at the University of Glasgow. In 1837, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1840, he took a Bachelor of Arts degree, with honours in mathematics and the classics, followed, in 1842, by a Fellowship at Trinity, with an eventual Master's degree. For two years thereafter he was a coach at Cambridge, and, in 1845, became Professor of English in London University, studying law meanwhile at the Inner Temple. He was called to the bar in 1846, following the Northern Circuit, and, in 1850, was Assistant Secretary to the Board of Health, becoming a full secretary in 1854, with an income of a thousand pounds a year. He remained in public position until 1871, when he retired on a pension of six hundred and fifty pounds.

From the very first he was a journalist, writing for such papers as *The Morning Chronicle* and the *Daily News*. At an early date, he became one of the contributors to *Punch*. His criticisms on art and the theatre won him considerable reputation. Yet what he earned as a literary man and as public official was nothing in comparison with the income that came to him through the rapid writing of dramas. His life was one of active service in the theatre, — as active as that of Robertson. There are those who claim that both as an editor of *Punch* — for he succeeded Shirley Brooks in 1874, and held the office until his death — and as writer of leaders and books, his scholarly attainment was continually handicapping his lighter genius as a wit. The chronicler who has written the delightful record, "The History of *Punch*", claims that when Tom Taylor became its editor, his taste was too classic and his fun too scholarly, too well-ordered, too set and ponderous for the post. He likewise states that, under the editorship of Douglas Jerrold, *Punch* was democratic, but that under the guiding hand of Tom Taylor, it became decidedly radical, anti-Beaconsfield, and anti-Imperial.

However sedate Taylor may have been, he was a great comrade of the men identified with the wit of the Victorian era. His love for the theatre took shape in early years; for he played in amateur theatricals, the presiding genius for which was Charles Dickens, assisted by the artists, John Leech and Cruikshank.

As a playwright, Tom Taylor's record is seventy or more dramas, written in less than thirty-five years. He attempted every form of amusement, leaning heavily upon adaptation, and resorting, wherever advisable, to collaboration. His "Masks and Faces", written in conjunction with Charles Reade, was produced at the Haymarket, on November 20, 1852. His "Our American Cousin" was given at Laura Keene's Theatre, in New York, in 1858, and was the play in which E. A. Sothern won fame as *Lord Dundreary*.

It was not the highest type of literary work, the collaboration conducted by Reade and Taylor. We have the former's own testimony:

> While Taylor was away at his office [he said], I wrote, and when he came back at night, he cut. Then he wrote a bit and I cut. It was snip, snap, slish, slash. We were both pugnacious. Taylor had the face and the pluck of a pugilist, and I fear I am built that way myself, so we rowed and rowed, fell out, and then fell in again.

The actors and the management were beset as to which side to take, and they fluctuated like the needle of a compass, until the manuscript of "Masks and Faces"

was made ready. But, in after years, the inevitable dispute arose as to the proportionate share of each author in the making of this stage success. Mr. Arnold Taylor came to his brother's rescue in the following terms:

> Reade was our guest at Chiswick Lodge, and the method of writing the play was this, that during the day (my brother being in town at his office), Reade wrote long passages, which were as ruthlessly cut to pieces, or rejected, at night by my brother, when they sat down to put together and complete their work. And morning after morning, as I well remember, when we were at breakfast, Reade used, half in sorrow, half in fun, to say to my mother, "There, Mrs. Taylor, my gentleman has been at his old game. He has cut out every line of that dialogue, and all those sentiments you so much admired when I read them to you yesterday afternoon."

Reade's subtle revenge took place when the time came for him to write the novel from the play; for he put into the narrative nearly everything which had been sacrificed during collaboration. Yet even then, he stood indebted to Taylor, as the dedication to the book will show: "To Tom Taylor, my friend and coadjutor in the comedy of 'Masks and Faces', to whom the reader owes much of the best matter of this tale."

Those who wish to carry further the association between these two will find much small gossip in John Coleman's "Charles Reade as I Knew Him." For "Masks and Faces" was not the only collaborative work done by Reade and Taylor, nor was this play the only successful attempt made by Reade for the stage.

The reader is likewise referred to E. A. Sothern's "Memoirs" for a history of the evolution of "Our American Cousin."

When all is told, Taylor's pride was showered not so much upon his comedies as upon what he termed his "Historical Plays", which were issued in a special edition, in 1877, and which included "The Fool's Revenge", taken from Victor Hugo's "Le Roi s'Amuse" (December 19, 1869), "'Twixt Axe and Crown", culled from the German (May 22, 1870), "Joan of Arc" (April 10, 1871), "Lady Clancarty" (March 9, 1874), and "Anne Boleyn" (March, 1875). In the preface to this edition he wrote:

> I have no wish to screen myself from literary criticism behind the plea that my plays were meant to be acted. It seems to me that every drama submitted to the judgment of audiences should be prepared to encounter that of readers. I have in all cases acknowledged in *notes* attached to the plays the sources to which I have been indebted for the suggestions of my subjects. . . .

Taylor was continually being accused of plagiarism. These accusations he denied many times over, laying claim to the legitimate use he made of other people's work. In the instance of "The Fool's Revenge", which was taken from Hugo, he avers that he was pushed into writing a play founded upon the libretto of the opera, "Rigoletto", and that, when he turned to Hugo, he found in "Le Roi s'Amuse" which was

> wanting in dramatic motive and cohesion . . . so much that was defective in that central secret of stage effect, climax — that I determined to take the situation of the jester and his daughter, and to recast in my own way the incidents in which their story was invested.

It was about this time, — to be exact, 1871, — that a controversy arose between Taylor and the critic, "Q" (Thomas Purnell), during which the latter accused Taylor of leaning heavily on French drama, and of scarcely ever having produced an original play. Many letters passed between them in the public prints, and from them a quotation by Taylor is worth while, as illustrating his point of view respecting his sources. He wrote to the editor of the *Athenæum:*

> Your critic describes me as "the great foster-father of the Gallic drama!" adding, that most of my plays "owe something to somebody other than myself." I think there are few plays, or books either, of which this might not be said. But as to the specific charge, which forms the staple of the article, that I am a signal offender deserving a special scourging, in the way of borrowing from the French, I wish to inform him, and any of your readers who may be curious in the matter, that out of the hundred plays, more or less, which I have given to the stage, not more than ten are derived from French sources of any kind, and that of these ten not more than half are adaptations of French dramas — the others being founded on French stories or incidents mentioned in French history or memoirs. I leave it to the judgment of any of your readers who may be conversant with the history of our stage, present or past, if this proportion of original to second-hand works supports the charge, which it seems the whole object of the article to fix upon me, of special sin in "conveying" from the French and entire lack of originality.
>
> Again, with regard to that very portion of the play which has a foreign ground-work, and in answer to most of the arguments of the article, I take the liberty of reproducing here a passage from the Preface to "The Ticket-of-Leave Man."

There followed an ample quotation from the Introductory, printed elsewhere. In this way did Tom Taylor defend himself from the accusation that, as a playwright, he simply repeated the situations and characterizations invented by others. But his method was dangerous, and in many cases led him into squandering good ideas for lack of inventiveness, and encouraged in him a tendency to follow the lines of least resistance.

Among his friends may be counted George Meredith, whom he often visited at Weybridge, meeting there the painters, Millais and Watts. Later he visited Meredith at Box Hill. The novelist was an enthusiastic associate of the prolific dramatist, probably admiring him more for his biography of Benjamin Haydon and for the work he did on Leslie's "Autobiographical Recollections" and "Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds", than for the clap-trap creation done by him for the theatre. Yet Taylor never failed to discuss with Meredith any new theatrical ideas stirring in his mind. For example, he wrote of his plan for "Lady Clancarty; or, Wedded and Wooed", receiving from Meredith encouragement and warning — a warning which was a great novelist's indirect criticism of the entire Victorian school of drama. Meredith always expected the stage to look deep into the wells of human nature.

> Box Hill, Dorking, November 18, 1871.
>
> My dear Tom, — How I envy you the new subject you have chosen. It has been ringing through me all the morning. I feel like a man who has been introduced to the beautiful woman of a friend, and found her incomparable,

made for him himself, and all he can do is to cry out in honesty — take warning if you don't espouse her within a fortnight, and further, if even then you don't do justice to her, positive and spiritual, I feel myself released from the obligation to respect your claims, I will challenge your reputation, and I will beat her forthwith, in contempt of you.

Why not first write the story, and then dramatize it? It would make as lovely a story as striking a drama. For the latter it has every splendid and noble quality. Oh! you happy fellow. But be worthy of your luck. Let nothing delay you, — I repeat my first warning.

What I just fear is, that you will make the brother a villain. Give him some higher ground of action, drop villainy. There is here a chance of lending the theme a touch of old tragedy of the classic idea. For this purpose of course you must heighten the hero's character, and have him to be more than a simple captain of horse. Jacobitism could hardly inspire him: the sense of fealty might, and it might give occasion to put stress on the ancient notion of loyal sentiment to a race in a young man's heart — inherited. The brother then, standing for law, order, and the like, might think the State had reason to dread this youth. The sister would take the woman's view. Then you have the three in a perfect triangle, fit for your best powers, — or mine.

The above only to throw you a modest hint from your hasty outline. — Ever lovingly yours,

George Meredith.

But the dramatists of Taylor's ilk had very little high-ground for action in their plays; they were believers in nothing so deeply based as Meredith's proposal. Law, order, consistency were farthest from their minds.

"The Ticket-of-Leave Man", selected for inclusion in the present collection, was played at the London Olympic Theatre, May 27, 1863, and the following year at the Winter Garden, in New York.

It is said that for the manuscript of this play, which held the English stage so many years, and reaped a fortune for the many concerned in its success, Taylor received the munificent sum of one hundred and fifty pounds, out of which he had to pay a literary hack for the rough translation from the French original of Brisebarre and Nuz. The play stands as one of the typical melodramas of the Victorian era, and if it is taken in contrast with Galsworthy's "Justice", we can judge how far technique and purpose and inventiveness have advanced, and how unreal are the violent psychologies of crime drama, as conceived from the French, when placed by the side of studied realism, centred on a situation deep-grounded in social responsibility. To this day, *Detective Hawkshaw* retains the vitality which would thrill any district telegraph boy. But *Sherlock Holmes* goes him one better in subtlety and consistency. In measuring Taylor's play, however, one must recollect that to the Victorian audiences its sham sentiments were taken seriously. There are in it every now and then attempts at realism. Yet Taylor slipped from drama to melodrama in the progress of a scene as readily as he passed from *you* to *thou* in a line of dialogue. The narrative quality of the play is better than its theatricalism, and its varied characterization is not so bad.

To the present generation Tom Taylor, who died on July 12, 1880, is probably best known for his poetic lines on the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, published in *Punch*, on May 6, 1865, and beginning "*You* lay a wreath on murdered Lincoln's

bier." But to his own contemporaries he was an acknowledged genius, with a variety of claims on the respect and admiration of his co-workers. Archer says that from the commendable qualities of Tom Robertson and Tom Taylor one good dramatist could have been made. As "Q" claimed, all of Taylor's dramas possessed personality and individual marks of distinction. But they were written with studied attention to the wants of the audience of the time.

THE TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN

A DRAMA, IN FOUR ACTS

By TOM TAYLOR, Esq.

INTRODUCTORY

I have to thank Mr. Emden for his aid and superintendence as manager, and all the actors concerned in this drama for the large part of the success of the piece which is due to the excellent acting of every one engaged in it. I owe extra thanks to Mr. Horace Wigan for his intelligent labours as stage-manager.

Mr. Neville gives great force to the part of *Brierly* by his unstaginess, the general truth as well as force of his impersonation, and, in particular, by the excellence of his north-country dialect, which is essential to the proper representation of the part.

Actors of this character should bear in mind that any staginess or stiltedness will be fatal to its effect.

As much has been said *apropos* of this drama, on the subject of originality in play writing, I wish to submit here a few remarks on this matter. As regards the present play, all credit for the invention of the story belongs to MM. Brisebarre and Nuz, the authors both of "Les Drames de la Vie", and of the drama of "Leonard", founded, as well as "The Ticket-of-Leave Man", on "Le Rétour de Melun", one of the *drames* in question. But here my obligation to the French authors ends. The dialogue is my own. I have made the personages in the play, its sentiments, and its action English, and I claim, on this ground, some, at least, of the rights of a creator. I have always conceived that the dramatist is at liberty to take his story where he pleases, whether from life, from history, or from fiction. Scarcely any subject treated, in the drama or in romance, but has roots in something besides the author's personal invention or observation. In this free appropriation of his subject-matter, if in nothing else, the puniest playwright, who adapts a novel or a predecessor's piece, may claim fellowship with Shakespeare. No one borrowed his subjects so freely and widely as the great master of all dramatists; he did not scruple to lay under contribution even the plays of earlier English writers, recasting them, and giving the breath of his own life to their dead bones. I admit, at the same time, that it is perfectly fair that the sources from which an author derives his subject should be stated; and it is fair, also, that a dramatist who invents his own story, as well as the dramatic dress of it, should receive the additional credit which his inventive faculty deserves.

I have invented many of my subjects; I have borrowed several; in my printed plays, I have invariably mentioned the source to which I am indebted for my story. Of my longer comedies and dramas, "Victims", "The Unequal Match", "The Contested Election", "The Overland Route", "Payable on Demand", "Helping Hands", "The Babes in the Wood", and "The American Cousin" are strictly of my own invention — subjects as well as treatment. In the case of other pieces, like "Plot and Passion", "Masks and Faces", "The King's Rival", "Two Loves and a Life", I have worked in partnership, but may claim, at least, half the honours of invention, as well as dramatic treatment. In others, as "Still Waters Run Deep", "Retribution", "The House and the Home", and "The Fool's Revenge", I have

worked on themes supplied by the plays or novels of others. But wherever I have done this, I maintain that comparison of my work with that on which it is founded will show that I have nowhere confined myself to the functions of a mere reproducer of other men's thoughts in another language, but that I have thought for myself, and engrafted dramatic shoots of my own growing upon the stocks which I have transplanted.

Lastly, I may express my belief, however startling the avowal may be thought, that there has been no period, for the last two centuries, in which invention and activity have been more conspicuous in the dramatic field than during the thirty or forty years which include the epoch of such dramatists as Miss Mitford, Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer-Lytton, James White, Jerrold, Browning, G. Darley, Searle, Marston, Horne, Lovell, Troughton, Bell, Mrs. Gore, Sullivan, Peake, Poole, Hook, Planché, Charles and George Dance, the Mortons, Mark Lemon, Buckstone, Selby, Fitzball (who, whatever may be the literary quality of his plays, has given evidence of genuine romantic invention), Bernard, Coyne, Oxenford, Shirley Brooks, Watts, Phillips, and those peculiar products of our own time, the burlesque writers, like the Brothers Brough, and Messrs. Byron and Burnand.

T. Taylor.

Lavender Sweep,
Wandsworth, June, 1863.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

		Olympic Theatre, London, 1863	*Winter Garden, New York*, 1864
ROBERT BRIERLY .	*a Lancashire Lad*	Mr. H. Neville	Mr. W. J. Florence
JAMES DALTON . .	*alias Downey, alias The Tiger*	Mr. Atkins	Mr. A. H. Davenport
HAWKSHAW . . .	*a Detective* . .	Mr. Horace Wigan	Mr. Hagan
MELTER MOSS		Mr. G. Vincent	Mr. Bland
GREEN JONES		Mr. R. Soutar	Mr. V. Bowers
MR. GIBSON . . .	*a Bill Broker* .	Mr. Maclean	Mr. Hind
SAM WILLOUGHBY		Miss Raynham	Mrs. Floyd
MALTBY		Mr. H. Cooper	Mr. T. Morris
BURTON		Mr. Franks	Mr. Smith
MAY EDWARDS		Miss Kate Saville	Mrs. Chanfrau
EMILY ST. EVREMOND		Miss Hughes	Mrs. W. J. Florence
MRS. WILLOUGHBY		Mrs. Stephens	Mrs. Hind

GUESTS, NAVVIES, &c.

Time — The Present Day — An interval of three years and a half between the First and Second Acts, and intervals of six and four months between the Second and Third, and Third and Last Acts, respectively.

THE TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN

ACT I

SCENE. — *The Bellevue Tea Gardens, in the south-west Suburbs of London. Summer evening. Front of the Tavern with ornamental verandah; arbours along the stage, with tables and seats; trees, shrubs, statues, etc. at the back, with ornamental orchestra and concert room.*

[PARTIES, *male and female, seated at the different tables;* WAITERS *serving refreshments. Music heard off. As the curtain rises the parties are heard giving their orders;* MALTBY *moving about with an eye to the* GUESTS, WAITERS, *etc.; two* DETECTIVES *at table.*]

1ST PARTY. Three hots with ——

WAITER [*serving another table*]. Yes, sir. — Brandy and soda for you, sir.

2D PARTY. Tea for four — shrimps and a muffin.

WAITER. Coming! [*Serving another party*] Pot of half-and-half for you, sir. [*At* DETECTIVE'S *table*] Two Sherry negus, two shillings. [*Takes money*]

MALTBY [*moving about*]. Now, James, three teas and a muffin in 5. — Jackson, money in 6. [*To a* GUEST] Uncommon thirsty weather, sir, uncommon. [*To another party*] If I might recommend a cobbler for the lady, sir, delicious refreshment for July. Now, James, look after them brandies in 3. [*Moves off*]

[*Enter* HAWKSHAW; *he strolls carelessly to the* DETECTIVES' *table, then in an undertone and without looking at them*]

HAWKSHAW. Report.

1ST DETECTIVE. [*In same tone and without looking at* HAWKSHAW] All right.

HAWKSHAW. [*Same tone*] Here's old Moss. Keep an eye on him. [*Strolls off*]

[*Enter* MOSS, — *sits at table*]

MOSS. [*To the* WAITER] Good evening, James. Four penn'orth of brandy, if you please, James. [*Sits in chair*] And a little peppermint. [*Coughs and looks around*] Tiger not here yet. [*Bell rings*]

MALTBY. The concert bell, ladies and gentlemen — in the Rotunda. [*Pointing to the concert room*] The first talent — selections from the best classical music, and original nigger melodies. This way.

[*Exit* MALTBY, *towards concert room. — Most of the parties move off, leaving* DETECTIVES, *and a* GUEST *here and there*]

[*Enter* DALTON]

MOSS [*stirring and sipping his brandy and peppermint*]. Warm and comfortable. Tiger ought to be here before this. [*As he stirs, his eye falls on the spoon; he takes it up, weighs it in his fingers*] Uncommon neat article — might take in a good many people — plated, though, plated.

[*While* MOSS *is looking at the spoon,* DALTON *takes his seat at* MOSS'S *table, unobserved by him*]

DALTON. Not worth flimping, eh?

MOSS [*starting, but not recognizing him*]. Eh, did you speak to me, sir?

DALTON. What? don't twig me? Then it is a good get up. [*He lifts his hat, and gives him a peculiar look*] Eh, Melter?

MOSS [*recognizing him*]. What, Tiger!

DALTON. Stow that. There's no tigers here. My name's Downy; you mind that. John Downy, from Rotherham, jobber and general dealer.

MALTBY [*coming down to* DALTON]. Now, sir, what can I have the pleasure of ordering you, sir?

DALTON. My good friend, Mr. Moss here, insists on standing a bottle of sherry.

MOSS. [*In alarm*] No, no!

DALTON. What, you will make it champagne? very well, I'm not proud. [*To* MALTBY] I like it dry, mind, and none of your home-brewed; I buy my rhubarb-juice at the greengrocer's.

[*Exit* MALTBY]

MOSS. Come, Ti— [DALTON *gives him a look, which stops him*] A joke's a joke. But a bottle of real champagne at ten and six —

DALTON. That's serious, eh? Well, I've taken a serious turn; always do when it's low tide here.

[*Pointing to his pocket*]

MOSS. Down on your luck, eh?

DALTON [*shrugs his shoulder*]. The Crushers are getting to know too much; then there's the Nailer's been after me.

MOSS. What, Hawkshaw, the 'cutest detective in the force?

DALTON. He's taken his oath on the Bow Street Office testament to be square with me for that Peckham job — [*Hesitates*]

MOSS. Ah!

DALTON. When I spoiled his mate.

[*Shrugs his shoulders*]

MOSS [*shaking his head*]. Ah, I always said that life preserver of yours would be doing somebody a mischief.

[*Re-enter* MALTBY, *with champagne and glasses*]

DALTON. Hush, here's the tipple.

MALTBY [*at back of table, uncorking and pouring out*]. And though I say it, there ain't a better bottle opened at Buckingham Palace. Ten an' six, Mr. Moss — there's a colour — there's a bouquet!

MOSS [*grumbling as he pays*]. There ought to be at the price.

MALTBY [*going up*]. Now, Jackson, take orders in the Rotunda.

[*Exit* MALTBY]

DALTON [*drinking*]. Ah, tidy swizzle!

MOSS. And so you're keeping dark, eh?

DALTON. Yes, pottering about on the sneak, flimping or smashing a little when I get the chance; but the Nailer's too hard on me. There's no picking up a gentlemanly livelihood. Hang me, if I haven't often thought of turning respectable.

MOSS. No, no; it ain't so bad as that yet. [*Looking around, and speaking cautiously*] Now, I have the beautifullest lot of Bank of England flimsies that ever came out of Birmingham. It's the safest paper to work, and you should have it cheap, dirt cheap, and credit till you'd planted it.

DALTON. And how about the lagging! If I'm nailed it's a lifer.

MOSS. Bless you, I wouldn't have you chance it; but in the high society you keep, you could surely pick up a flat to put off the paper.

DALTON. I've the very man. I gave him an appointment here, for this evening.

MOSS. Did you, though? How pat things come about! Who is he?

DALTON. A Lancashire lad; an only son, he tells me. The old folks spoiled him as long as they lived, left him a few hundreds, and now he's got the collar over his head, and is kicking 'em down, seeing life. [*Laughs*] And life in London ain't to be seen, without paying at the doors, eh, Melter?

MOSS. Ha, ha, ha! and you're selling him the bill of the play.

DALTON. I'm putting him up to a thing or two — cards, skittles, billiards, sporting houses, sparring houses, night houses, casinos — every short cut to the devil and the bottom of a flat's purse. He's as green as a leek, and as soft as new cheese, no vice, steady to ride or drive, and runs in a snaffle.

[*Rises*]

MOSS [*rising*]. Oh, beautiful, beautiful! [*Rubs his hands*] It would be a sin to drop such a beautiful milch cow! Suppose we pumped him in partnership?

DALTON. Thank you, I know *your* partnership articles, — *me* all the kicks, and *you* all the half-pence. But if I can work him to plant a lot of these flimsies of yours, I don't mind; remember, though, I won't go higher than fifteen bob for a fiver.

MOSS. What, only fifteen bob! and such beauties, too, they'd take in the Bank chairman — fifteen! I'd better chance it myself! Only fifteen — it's robbery.

DALTON. Take it or leave it.

[*Takes up the newspaper, and sits at table*]

MOSS. I must take a turn, and think it over. [*Going, returns*] I'll bring you the flimsies. Come, you'll allow me a pound?

DALTON. Bid me down again, and I stand on ten shillings — now you know. It's like it or lump it.

[*He returns to his paper*]

MOSS [*holding up his hands*]. Oh, dear! oh, dear! What it is to deal with people that have no consciences!

[*Exit*]

BRIERLY. [*Heard off*] A bottle of champagne, lad, and half a dozen Cabanas — and look sharp!

DALTON [*looking up from paper*]. Here's my pigeon!

[*Enter* BRIERLY; *he looks feverish and dishevelled, and is dressed in an exaggerated sporting style.* DALTON *lays the paper down.*]

Ah, Bob! up to time as usual!

BRIERLY. Aye! nobody shall say Bob Brierly craned while he could keep 't going. [WAITER *brings champagne and cigars*] Here — you — a clean glass for my friend.

DALTON [*pointing to* MOSS'S *bottle*]. I've had my whack already.

BRIERLY. Nay, lad, you can find room for another glass.

[WAITER *brings another glass* — BRIERLY *pours out wine*]

It puts heart into a chap! [*Drinks eagerly*] I've nearly lived on 't this fortnight past.

DALTON [*stops his hand*]. Take care, Bob, or we shall have you in the doctor's hands.

BRIERLY. Doctor? Nay; I'm as game as a pebble and as stell as a tree! [*Fills* DALTON'S *glass with a shaking hand*] Curse the glass! Here — drink, man, drink. I can't abear drinking single handed. I like company — always did. [*Looking round uneasily*] And now, I don't know how it is — [*Nervously looking down near the table*] No, no, it's nothing! Here, have a weed. [*Offers cigar*]

DALTON. I'll take a light from you. [*As* DALTON *lights his cigar at* BRIERLY'S, *the shaking of* BRIERLY'S *hand becomes more apparent*] Come, come, Master Bob, you're getting shaky — this won't do.

BRIERLY. It's that waking — waking. — If I could only sleep. [*Earnestly*] Oh, man — can't you help a chap to a good night's rest? I used to sleep like a top down at Glossop. But in this great big place, since I've been enjoying myself, seeing life — I don't know — [*Passing his hand across his eyes*] I don't know how it is — I get no rest — and when I do, it's worse than none — there's great black crawling things about me. [*Gulps down a glass of wine*] I say, Downy; do you know how a chap feels when he's going mad?

DALTON. I know the symptoms of *del. trem.* pretty well — sit down, sit down. First and foremost [*Puts him a chair*] I prescribe a devilled biscuit — I'll doctor one for you. [*Calling*] Waiter! a plate of biscuits, toasted hot — butter and cayenne. [BRIERLY *hides his head in his hands — aside, looking at him contemptuously*] The horrors! ah, he's seen too much of life lately — Bob, are you in cash?

BRIERLY. Welly cleaned out — I've written to the lawyer-chap, down at Glossop — him that's got all my property to manage, yo' know — for more brass.

DALTON. [*Aside*] Now, if I'd a few of Moss's fivers — here's a chance. — You must bank with me till the brass comes. Delighted to lend you a sovereign — five — ten — as much as you want.

[*Enter* MOSS]

BRIERLY. Nay, will yo' though? That's friendly of you. Here's luck — and sink the expense!

[*He pours out wine, standing in front of table*]

MOSS. [*Aside to* DALTON] I've got the flimsies — I'll do it at seven ten.

DALTON. [*Aside*] Fork over.

MOSS. [*Aside, giving him a roll of notes*] There's fifty to begin with — twenty, a tenner, and four fives. Plant the big 'un first.

[*Enter* HAWKSHAW; *meets* MOSS *at back of chair — approaches the table where the* DETECTIVES *are — one of them nods towards* MOSS *and* DALTON]

MOSS. Good evening, gentleman, you'll find my friend, Mr. Downy, excellent company, sir. Very improving for a young man from the country. [*Aside*] That's an honestly earned seven-pun-ten! [*Exit* MOSS]

[WAITER *brings biscuits and cayenne*]

DALTON. Now, for your devil, Master Bob. [*As he prepares the biscuit,* HAWKSHAW *approaches the table, and takes up the paper which* DALTON *has put down* — DALTON *pushes the biscuit across to* BRIERLY] Try that!

HAWKSHAW. Beg pardon, sir, but if the paper's not in hand —

[*Sits at back of table*]

DALTON [*rudely, and pocketing the note hastily*]. Eh — sir?

HAWKSHAW [*sitting down coolly at the table and unfolding the paper*]. Papers very dull lately, don't you think so, sir?

DALTON [*assuming a country dialect*]. I never trouble 'em much, sir, except for the Smithfield Market List, in the way of business.

HAWKSHAW. Ah, much my own case. They put a fellow up to the dodges of the town, though: for instance, these cases of bad notes offered at the Bank lately.

[*Watching him close*]

DALTON. I never took a bad note in my life.

HAWKSHAW. You've been lucky — in the Smithfield line, too, I think you said. In the jobbing way, may I ask, sir, or in the breeding?

DALTON. Sometimes one, and sometimes t'other — always ready to turn the nimble shilling.

HAWKSHAW. My own rule.

DALTON. May I ask your business?

HAWKSHAW. The fancy iron trade. My principle is, to get as much of my stock on other people's hands as I can. From the country, I think?

DALTON. Yes, Yorkshire.

HAWKSHAW. Ah! I'm Durham myself; and this young gent?

BRIERLY. What's that to you? [*Pushing away the biscuit*] It's no use — I can't swallow a morsel.

HAWKSHAW. From Lancashire, I see; why, we are quite neighbours when we are at home — and neighbours ought to be neighbourly in this overgrown city, so I hope you'll allow me to stand treat — give it a name, gentlemen.

DALTON [*roughly*]. Thank you, I never drink with strangers.

BRIERLY. They've a saying down in Glossop, where I came from, If you want a welcome, wait to be axed.

HAWKSHAW. Ah, quite right to be cautious about the company you keep, young man. Perhaps I could give you a bit of good advice —

BRIERLY. Thank ye! I'm not in the way o' takin' good advice.

HAWKSHAW. Well, don't take bad; and you won't easy find a worse adviser than your thieving companion here.

DALTON [*firing up*]. Eh? what do you mean by that?

HAWKSHAW. Not you, sir. [*Tapping the champagne bottle*] This gentleman here. He robs people of their brains — their digestions — and their conscience — to say nothing of their money. But since you won't allow me to stand anything —

DALTON. And wish to keep ourselves to ourselves.

BRIERLY. And think your room a deal better than your company — meanin' no offence you know.

HAWKSHAW [*rises*]. Not in the least. If gentlemen can't please themselves in a public establishment! I'll wish you a very good evening. [*Aside*] A plant, — I'll keep an eye on 'em!

[*Exit*]

DALTON. [*Aside*] I don't half like the look of that fellow. There's something about his eye — I must make out if Moss knows him — Bob, will you excuse me for five minutes?

BRIERLY. Don't be long — I can't abear my own company.

DALTON. I've only a word to say to a customer. [*Exit*]

[HAWKSHAW *re-appears, watches* DALTON *off and follows him after a moment's interval*]

BRIERLY [*goes to chair*]. And I'll try to sleep till he comes back. If I could only sleep without dreaming! I never close my eyes but I'm back at Glossop wi' the old folks at home — 't mother fettlin' about me, as she used when I was a brat — and father stroking my head, and callin' me his bonny boy — noa, noa — I mustn't think o' them — not here — or I shall go mad.

[*Sinking his head in his hands, and sobbing*]

[*Music — other* GUESTS *come in and sit at the other tables*]

[*Enter* MALTBY]

MALTBY. Now then, James! Jackson, take orders. Interval of ten minutes allowed for refreshment. Give your orders, gents, give your orders. The nigger melodists will shortly commence their unrivalled entertainment, preliminary to the orchestral selection from Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony.*

[*Enter* MAY EDWARDS *with her guitar. — The* WAITERS *move about, bringing refreshments to tables*]

MAY. If they'll only let me sing to-night. [*Tuning guitar*]

MALTBY. Halloa, halloa! what's this? Oh, it's you, is it, Edwards? Come, I'm glad to see you're about again, but I can't have you cadging here.

MAY. Oh, Mr. Maltby, if you'll only allow me to try one song, and go round after it, I'll stop as soon as ever they ring up.

MALTBY. Well, well, you was always a well-behaved girl, so, for once in a way —

MAY. Oh, thank you, thank you, and if you should have an opening for me in the room, sir, when I'm quite strong again —

MALTBY. No chance of it, we're chuck full — a glut of talent; but if I *should* be able to find room for you in the chorus, and to double Miss Plantagenet when she's in the tantrums, ten shillings a week, and find your own wardrobe, you know — I'm not the man to shrink from a generous action. Now then, Jackson, money in 4. [*Exit* MALTBY]

[MAY *sings*[1]]

Where daisies blow and waters glide,
My lonely cottage stands beside
The willowy brook that flows along
Its rushy banks with murmuring song.
And near the door there grows a tree,
So thick that scarce the cot you see,
And screens and shades my still retreat
From Winter's cold and Summer's heat;
And there, at eve, a nightingale
Will sit concealed and tell its tale —
So sweet, that all who wander by
Are fain to stop, and listen nigh.
Thou gentle child, with golden hair,
Whom long I've watched with love and care,
The wind is cold, and rough for thee,
Say, wilt thou come and dwell with me?

[*After her song she goes round the tables; all repulse her*]

1ST PARTY. The concert's quite enough without catterwauling between the acts.

2D PARTY. We've no small change, Miss. Waiter! bottle pale sherry!

3D PARTY. Be off!

4TH PARTY. Now then, what's the girl gaping at? Can't you take an answer?

MAY. [*To* BRIERLY] Please, sir —

BRIERLY. Be off with thee, lass. I'm in no mood for music.

MAY [*suppressing her tears*]. Not a penny!

BRIERLY. Stop, lass; [*Feels in his pocket*] not a farden. Where's Downy? Come here, what'st crying at?

MAY. I've not taken anything to-day, and I've not been well lately.

[*She turns faint and grasps a seat to support herself*]

BRIERLY [*rising*]. Poor thing! here, [*Places chair*] sit thee down; why, thee looks welly clemmed. Try and eat a bit. [*He gives her a biscuit*]

MAY. Thank you, sir, you're very kind. [*She tries to swallow but cannot*] If I had a drink of water.

BRIERLY. Wather? [*At back of table*] Nay, a sup o' this will hearten thee up. [*Tries to give her wine from his bottle*] Not a drop! [*He looks around and sees* WAITER *crossing, bringing a decanter of sherry*] Here, that'll do. [*Takes decanter*]

WAITER. Beg pardon, sir, it's for No. 1.

BRIERLY. I'se No. 1.

1ST PARTY. Hollo, sir! that's my sherry.

BRIERLY. No, it's mine.

1ST PARTY. I'll let you know. [*He rises and turns up his cuffs;* BRIERLY *looks at him*] — No, I'll see the landlord. [*Exit* 1ST PARTY]

BRIERLY. There, lass. [*Pours out a glass for* MAY] Sup that.

MAY [*drinks*]. It's wine.

BRIERLY. Sup it up.

MAY. It makes me so warm.

BRIERLY. It'll put some heart i' thee. Sup again, thou'lt tune thy pipes like a mavis on that. Now try and eat a bit.

MAY. Oh, sir, you're too good.

BRIERLY. Good? me! nay —

[*Enter* MALTBY, *followed by* 1ST PARTY]

MALTBY [*soothingly*]. Merely a lark, depend upon it. The gentleman will apologize. [*To* BRIERLY] The gent who ordered that bottle of sherry —

BRIERLY. Let him ordther another; I'll pay for it.

MALTBY. The gent can't say fairer. [*Calls*] Bottle sherry, Jackson; seven and six, sir.

BRIERLY. Here. [*Feels in his pockets*] Eh? score it down.

[1] The words translated from the German of Uhland, and the music composed by Mrs. Tom Taylor.

MALTBY. We ain't in the habit of scoring, sir, not to strangers.

BRIERLY. Then yo'd betther begin; my name's Bob Brierly.

MALTBY. Your name may be Bob Brierly, sir, or Bob Anybody, sir, but when people take wine in this establishment, sir — especially other party's wine — they pay for it.

[DALTON *re-appears*]

BRIERLY. A tell yo' — I'll pay as soon as my friend comes back.

MALTBY. Oh, your friend! A regular case of bilk —

BRIERLY. Now yo' take care.

[*Firing up; the parties gather round from tables*]

MAY [*frightened*]. Oh, please, sir, please, Mr. Maltby.

1ST PARTY. It's too bad.

2D PARTY. Why can't you pay the man?

3D PARTY. Police!

DALTON [*coming forward*]. Holloa! what's all this?

BRIERLY [*seizing him*]. Here, Downy, you lend me a sovereign to pay this chap.

DALTON. Sorry I haven't change, but we'll manage it directly. [*To* MALTBY] It's all right. I'll be bail for my friend here.

MALTBY. Your word's quite enough, sir. Any friend of Mr. Moss's —

DALTON. Come, Bob, don't be a fool; take a turn and cool yourself. [*Drawing him off; aside*] Now to plant the big 'un. [*Draws him off*]

MALTBY. [*To* GUESTS] Sorry for this disturbance, gents, quite out of keeping with the character of my establishment. [*Bell — Music, piano*] But the concert is about to re-commence; that way, gents, to the Rotunda. [GUESTS *go off — Fiercely to* MAY] This is all along of your cadging, Edwards, sitting down to drink with a promiscuous party.

MAY. Oh, I'm so sorry — he never thought — it was all his kindness.

MALTBY [*sneeringly*]. Kindness! much kindness he'd have showed you, if you'd been old and ugly. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MAY [*indignantly*]. *You* ought to be ashamed of yourself! it is cruel in you to insult a helpless and friendless girl like me.

MALTBY. Insult! ho, ho, ha, here's a lark! A half-starved street-singer checking me in my own establishment! You'd better apply for an engagement, *you* had, on the first vacancy. [*Looking off*] Hollo! what's that? carriage company! Heavy swells on the lark, white ties and pink bonnets! Show the ladies and gentleman to the Rotunda, Jackson. [*Exit*]

MAY [*sinks down at one of the tables*]. I'm foolish to be angry, my bread depends on such as he. Oh, if I could only get away from this weary work! if some kind lady would take me in. I'm quick at my needle; but who'd take me, a vagabond, without a friend to speak for me? I'm all alone in the world now. It's strange how people's life is made for 'em. I see so many girls, nicely dressed, well off, with parents to love and care for 'em. I can't bear it sometimes, to see them, and then think what I am, and what's before me. [*Puts her hand to her face*] I'm a silly girl: it's all because I'm so weak from the fever. There's nothing like keeping a good heart. How good he was to me; it was all through me he got into this trouble; but I mustn't think of him. Ah, [*Looking off*] there's a pleasant looking party yonder. Come along, old friend, you've to earn my supper yet.

[*Takes her guitar and exit*]

[*Enter* GREEN JONES *and* EMILY ST. EVREMOND — *he wears evening costume, black, white tie, Gibus hat, etc.; she is gaily dressed, pink bonnet, etc.*]

GREEN [*speaking as he comes down*]. Excuse me, Emily! Anything but the Rotunda; if your mama likes the music let her enjoy it.

EMILY. I'm sure the music's very nice, Mr. Jones.

GREEN. *Mr. Jones*, Miss St. Evremond! What have I done to be kept at arm's length by that *chevaux de frise* of a mister? was it for this that I thawed the thick-ribbed ice of Mrs. Traddles?

EMILY. Thick-ribbed ain't a proper word to use to any lady, and I tell you my ma's name ain't Traddles, Mr. Jones; it's the same as mine — St. Evremond; she's changed it at my wish.

GREEN. I beg pardon of your stern parient, [*Sits*] Mrs. St. Evremond, late Traddles; but I repeat, was it to be called *Mister* Jones that I treated Mrs.

St. E. and her chyild to the Star and Garter; and her chyild without Mrs. E. to the Trafalgar, where from the moonlit balcony that overhung the fragrant river, we watched together the sunset over the Isle of Dogs?

Emily. And very wrong it was of me to go to that whitebait dinner without ma; and preciously she blew me up about it, though I told her you couldn't have treated me with more respect if I'd been a countess instead of a coryphée.

Green. Emily, you only did me justice. My intentions are honourable. If you are in the ballet, that's no reason you shouldn't be a dear, good girl. You've been a trump of a daughter; I don't see why you shouldn't turn out a trump of a wife. Emily, accept my hand.

Emily. Nonsense, Green, you don't mean it.

Green. I'm perfectly serious. My hand and my heart, my fortune and my future. Don't stare, Emily. It's as true as that my name is Green. I'm quite in earnest — I am indeed.

Emily. Oh! Green, dear, I'm in such agitation. [*Rises*]

Green. We will spend a rosy existence. You like life, and I flatter myself I understand it.

Emily. And don't *I?* I call this life — the music and the company, and the singing and the trapèze. I thought the man must break his neck. It was beautiful.

Green. Yes, I like to associate with all classes. "Survey mankind," you know, Emily — "from China" — to earthenware. So, when Charley Punter proposed a night at the tea gardens, I sank the swell; and here I am with Emily and her mama. Charley didn't seem to see the parient; but, "Propriety, Charley my boy," I said, and he submitted with a sigh. And now what will you have? [*Re-enter* May, — *she begins to sing*] Oh! anything but that. Now, do oblige me by shutting up, that's a good girl.

Emily. No, no, poor thing. Let her sing; she has a sweet voice.

Green. Flat, decidedly.

Emily [*contemptuously*]. You're another. Give me half a crown for her.

Green [*gives one; she asks by gesture for another*]. Two? Such a bore. I shall have to change a note at the bar.

Emily. You'll have to change a good many notes when we are married. [*To* May] Come along, you shall have both half crowns.

[*Exeunt* Green Jones *and* Emily, *as* May *is following*]

[*Enter* Brierly]

Brierly. Downy not here? He said I was to bring t' brass to our table.

May [*recognises him; comes down*]. 'Tis he! [*Joyously*] Oh, sir, I'm so sorry —

Brierly. Why, it's t' singin' lass. [*Crosses to her*] I say, have you seen my friend?

May. No, sir.

Brierly. And where's t' landlord. Here's that'll make him civil enough.

[*Shews a number of sovereigns in his hand*]

May. Oh, what a lot of money!

Brierly. Brass for a twenty pound note. I got it changed at t' cigar shop down t' road. He's a good 'un is Downy — lends me whatever I want. Here yo' landlord. Hoy!

[*Enter* Maltby]

Maltby. Coming! Coming! [*Recognising* Brierly] Oh, it's you.

Brierly [*flinging a half sovereign to* Maltby]. There; seven and six is for t' wine, and t' other half crown's for t' thrashin' I owe you.

[*Approaches him threateningly*]

Maltby [*pocketing the money and retreating*]. Take care — I'll teach you to insult a respectable licensed victualler. [*To* May, *who tries to calm* Brierly] And you too, you tramp, I'll have you locked up for annoying my customers. How do I know my spoons are safe?

Brierly. Thou cur!

[*He breaks away from* Maltby, *who escapes, crying* "Police!"]

May. I can't bear you should trouble for me, indeed, sir.

[*Concealing her tears*]

Brierly. Nay, never heed that muck-worm. Come, dry thine eyes. Thou's too soft for this life o' thine.

May [*apologetically*]. It's the fever, I think, sir — I usedn't to mind unkind looks and words much once.

Brierly. Here, take this, [*Puts money into her hand*] and stay thee quiet at home till thou'st i' fettle again.

May. Two sovereigns! oh, sir! [*Cries*]

Brierly. Nay, thou'lt make better

use o' t' brass than me — What, cryin' again! come, come, never heed that old brute; hard words break no bones, yo' know.

MAY. It's not *his* hard words I'm crying for now, sir.

BRIERLY. What then?

MAY. *Your* kind ones — they're harder to bear — they sound so strange to me.

BRIERLY. Poor thing! heaven help thee — thou mindest me of a sister I lost; she'd eyes like thine, and hair, and much t' same voice, nobbut she favert redder i' t' face, and spoke broader. I'd be glad whiles to have a nice gradely lass like you to talk to.

MAY. But where I live, sir, it's a very poor place, and I'm by myself, and —

BRIERLY [*hesitates*]. No, no — you're right — I couldn't come there, but I'm loth to lose sight of yo' too.

[*Enter* DALTON *hastily*]

DALTON. Brierly!

BRIERLY. Here's t' change — I've borrowed five o' the twenty.

DALTON. All right, now let's be off — I've a cab outside.

BRIERLY. [*To* MAY] Mind, if you want a friend, write to Bob Brierly, at the Lancashire Arms, Air-street, yo'll not forget.

MAY. Never — I'll set it down [*Aside*] in my heart!

DALTON. Come!

BRIERLY. And yo', tell me yo'r name — will yo'?

MAY. May Edwards.

DALTON. Confound your billing and cooing — come!

[*As* BRIERLY *follows* DALTON, HAWKSHAW *and two of the* DETECTIVES *appear*]

HAWKSHAW. You're wanted.

DALTON. [*Aside*] The crushers! Run, Bob!

[*Music* — DALTON *attempts to escape* — DETECTIVES *detain* BRIERLY — HAWKSHAW *seizes* DALTON — *in the scuffle*, DALTON'S *hat and wig are knocked off*]

HAWKSHAW. I know you, James Dalton!

DALTON [*starting*]. Ah!

HAWKSHAW. Remember the Peckham job.

DALTON. The Nailer! Hit out, Bob!

[BRIERLY *has been wrestling with the two* DETECTIVES; *as* DALTON *speaks he knocks one down*]

BRIERLY. I have! Some o' them garottin' chaps!

MAY [*cries*]. Help! help!

[*Wringing her hands*]

[*A fierce struggle* — DALTON *escapes from* HAWKSHAW *and throws him — he draws a pistol* — DALTON *strikes him down with a life-preserver and makes his escape through the trees* — BRIERLY *is overpowered and handcuffed* — GUESTS *rush in and form Tableau*]

END OF ACT FIRST

ACT II

SCENE. — *The Room occupied by* MAY EDWARDS *in* MRS. WILLOUGHBY'S *House, humbly but neatly furnished; flowers in the window; a work-table; stool; door communicating with her bedroom; door leading to the staircase; guitar hanging against wall; needlework on the table.*

MAY *discovered with a birdcage on the table, arranging a piece of sugar and groundsel between the bars; sofa; chiffonier; American clock, etc.*

MAY. There, Goldie, I must give *you* your breakfast, though I don't care a bit for my own. Ah! you find singing a better trade than I did, you little rogue. I'm sure I shall have a letter from Robert this morning. I've all his letters here. [*Takes out a packet from her work-box*] How he *has* improved in his handwriting since the first. [*Opening letter*] That's more than three years back. Oh! what an old woman I'm getting! It's no use denying it, Goldie. [*To her bird*] If you'll be quiet, like a good, well-bred canary, I'll read you Robert's last letter. [*Reads*] "Portland, February 25th, 1860. My own dearest May, — [*Kissing it*] As the last year keeps slipping away, I think more and more of our happy meeting; but for your love and comfort, I think I should have broken down." Goldie, do you hear that? [*She kisses the letter*] "But now we both see how things are guided for the best. But for my being sent

to prison, I should have died before this, a broken-down drunkard, if not worse; and you might still have been earning hard bread as a street singer, or carried from a hospital ward to a pauper's grave." Yes, yes, [*Shuddering*] that's true. "This place has made a man of me, and you have found friends and the means of earning a livelihood. I count the days till we meet. Good-bye, and heaven bless you, prays your ever affectionate Robert Brierly." [*Kisses the letter frequently*] And don't I count the days too? There! [*Makes a mark in her pocket almanack*] Another gone! They seem so slow — when one looks forward — and yet they pass so quickly! [*Taking up birdcage*] Come, Goldie, while I work you must sing me a nice song for letting you hear that nice letter.

[*Hanging up birdcage — a knock at the door*]

[*Enter* EMILY]

EMILY [*entering*]. May I come in?

MAY. Oh, yes, Mrs. Jones.

[*Sits to work*]

EMILY. St. Evremond, please, Miss Edwards. Jones has changed his name. When people have come down in circumstances, the best way they can do is to keep up their names. [*Sits*] I like St. Evremond; it looks well in the bill, and sounds foreign. That's always attractive — and I dress my hair *à la Française*, to keep up the effect. I've brought back the shawl you were kind enough to lend me.

MAY. I hope you got the engagement, dear?

EMILY [*sighs*]. No; the proprietor said my appearance was quite the thing — good stage face and figure, and all that: you know how those creatures always flatter one; but they hadn't an opening just now in the comic duet and character-dance business.

MAY. I'm so sorry; your husband will be so disappointed.

EMILY. Oh! bless you, he doesn't know what I've been after. I couldn't bear to worrit him, poor fellow! He's had so many troubles. *I've* been used to rough it — before we came into our fortune.

[*Noise heard overhead* — MAY *starts*]

MAY. What noise is that? It's in your room.

EMILY. Don't be alarmed — it's only Green; I left him to practise the clog-dance while I went out. He's so clumsy. He often comes down like that in the double shuffles. But he gets on very nicely in the comic duets.

MAY. It's very fortunate he's so willing to turn his hand to anything.

EMILY. Yes, he's willing enough to turn his hand, only he is so slow in turning his legs. Ah, my dear, you're very lucky only having yourself to keep.

MAY. I find it hard enough to work sometimes. But after the life I've passed through, it seems paradise.

EMILY. Oh! I couldn't a-bear it; such a want of excitement! And you that was brought up to a public life too. [*Rises*] Every night about six, when they begin to light up the gas, I feel so fidgetty, you can't think — I want to be off to the theatre. I couldn't live away from the float, that is, not if I had to work for my living, — of course it was very different the three years we had our fortune.

[*Sighs and gives herself an air of martyrdom*]

MAY. I'm afraid Mr. Jones ran through a great deal in a very short time.

EMILY. Well, we were both fast, dear; and to do Jones justice, I don't think he was the fastest. You see he was used to spending, and I wasn't. It seemed so jolly at first to have everything one liked. [*A knock*]

MAY. Come in!

[*Enter* GREEN JONES, *much dilapidated; he wears a decayed dressing-gown and a shocking cap, and carries a pair of clogs in his hand; he throws himself into chair*]

MAY. Your wife's here, Mr. Jones.

EMILY. St. Evremond, please dear.

GREEN. Yes, Montague St. Evremond; that is to be in the paulo-poster-futurum. I thought you would be here, Milly. I saw you come in at the street door. [MAY *takes her work*]

EMILY. Oh, you were watching for me out of the window, I suppose, instead of practising your *pas*.

GREEN. I was allowing my shins an interval of refreshment. I hope, Miss Edwards, you may never be reduced to earn a subsistence by the clog hornpipe, or if you are, that you will be allowed to practise in your

stockings. The way I've barked my intractable shins!

EMILY. Poor dear fellow! There, there! He's a good boy, and he shall have a piece of sugar, he shall. [*Kissing him*]

GREEN. Sugar is all very well, Emily, but I'm satisfied I shall never electrify the British public in this style of pump. [*Showing clog*] The truth is, Miss Edwards, I'm not meant for a star of the ballet; as Emily says, I'm too fleshy.

EMILY. Stout was the word.

GREEN. Oh! was it? Anyway, you meant short-winded. My vocation is in the more private walks of existence. If I'd a nice, easy, light porter's place, now —

EMILY. Oh! Montague, how can you be so mean-spirited?

GREEN. Or if there's nothing else open to us but the music halls: I always said we should do better with the performing dogs.

EMILY. Performing dogs! Hadn't you better come to monkeys at once?

GREEN. I've a turn for puppies. I'm at home with them. It's the thing I've been always used to, since I was at college. But we're interrupting Miss Edwards. Come along, Emily; if you're at liberty to give your Montague a lesson in the poetry of motion under difficulties. [*Showing the clog*] But, oh, remember your Montague has shins, and be as sparing as possible of the double shuffles. [*Rises, leaving his clogs*]

EMILY. You poor, dear, soft-headed — soft-hearted — soft-shinned creature! What *would* you do without me? [*Comes back*] Oh, what a man it is; he has forgotten his dancing pumps, and I'm sure they're big enough. [*Exeunt* EMILY *and* GREEN JONES]

MAY [*folding up her shawl*]. How times are changed since she made him give me half-a-crown that dreadful night, when Robert — [*Sits*] — I can't bear to think of it, though all has turned out so well.

[*Enter* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

Ah, Mrs. Willoughby, I was expecting a visit from you. I've the week's rent all ready.

[*Gives her a folded parcel from small box on table*]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Which ready you always was, to the minit, that I will say, my dear. You'll excuse me if I take a chair, [*Sits*] these stairs is trying to an elderly woman — not that I am so old as many that looks younger, which when I'd my front tittivated only last week, Mr. Miggles, that's the hair-dresser at 22, he says to me, "Mrs. Willoughby," he says, "forty is what I'd give you with that front," he says. "No, Mr. Miggles," I says, "forty it was once, but will never be again, which trouble is a sharp thorn, and losses is more than time, and a shortness of breath along of a shock three years was last July." "No, Mr. Miggles," I says, "fronts can't undo the work of years," I says, "nor yet wigs, Mr. Miggles — which skin-partings equal to years, I never did see, and that's the truth." [*Pauses for breath*]

MAY. At all events, Mrs. Willoughby, you're looking very, very well this morning.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Ah, my dear, you are very good to say so, which, if it wasn't for rheumatics and the rates, one a-top of another, and them dustmen, which their carts is a mockery, unless you stand beer, and that boy, Sam, though which is the worst, I'm sure is hard to say, only a grand-mother's feelings is not to be told, which opodeldoc can't be rubbed into the 'eart, as I said to Mrs. Molloy — her that has my first floor front — which she says to me, "Mrs. Willoughby," says she, "nine oils is the thing," she says, "rubbed in warm," says she. "Which it's all very well, Mrs. Molloy," says I, "but how is a lone woman to rub it in the nape of the neck and the small of the back; and Sam that giddy, and distressing me to that degree. No, Mrs. Molloy," I says, "what's sent us we must bear it, and parties that's reduced to let lodgings, can't afford easy chairs," which well I know it, and the truth it is — and me with two beauties in chintz in the front parlor, which I got a bargain at the brokers when the parties was sold up at 24, and no more time to sit down in 'em than if I was a cherrybin.

MAY. I'm sure you ought to have one, so hard as you've worked all your life, and when Sam gets a situation —

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Sam, ah, that boy — I came here about him; hasn't he been here this morning?

MAY. No, not yet. I was expecting him — he promised to carry some things home for me.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Ah Miss Edwards if you would only talk to him; he don't mind anything I say, no more than if it was a flat-iron, which what that boy have cost me in distress of mind and clothes, and caps, and breakages never can be known — and his poor mother, which was the only one I brought up and had five, she says to me, "Mother," she says, "he's a big child," she says, "and he's a beautiful child, but he have a temper of his own"; which, "Mary," I says — she was called Mary, like you, my dear, after her aunt from which we had expectations but which was left to the Blind Asylum, and the Fishmongers' Alms Houses, and very like you she was, only she had light hair and blue eyes — "Mary, my dear," I says, "I hope you'll never live to see it," and took she was at twenty-three, sudden, and that boy I've had to mend and wash and do for ever since, and hard lines it is.

MAY. I'm sure he loves you very dearly, and has an excellent heart.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Heart, my dear — which I wish it had been his heart I found in his right-'and pocket as I was a-mending his best trowsers last night, which it was a short pipe, which it is nothing but the truth, and smoked to that degree as if it had been blackleaded, which many's the time when he've come in, I've said, "Sam," I've said, "I smell tobacco," I've said. "Grandmother," he'd say to me, quite grave and innocent, "p'raps it's the chimbley" — and him a child of fifteen, and a short pipe in his right-hand pocket! I'm sure I could have broke my heart over it, I could; let alone the pipe — which I flung it into the fire — but a happy moment since is a thing I have not known.

[*Pauses for breath*]

MAY. Oh! he'll get rid of all his bad habits in time. I've broken him in to carry my parcels already.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Yes, indeed! and how you can trust him to carry parcels; but, oh! Miss Edwards, if you'd talk to him, and tell him short pipes is the thief of time, and tobacco's the root of all evil, which Dean Close he've proved it strong enough, I'm sure — and I cut it out of the *Weekly Pulpit* — and wherever that paper is now — [*Rummaging in her pocket — knock at door*] That's at your door — which, if you're expecting a caller or a customer — [*Rises*]

MAY. No; I expect no one — unless it's Sam. [*Knock repeated, timidly*] Come in. [*Lays down her work*]

[BRIERLY *opens the door, timidly*]

BRIERLY [*doubtfully*]. Miss Edwards, please?

MAY [*rushing into his arms*]. Robert! you here!

BRIERLY. My own dear May!

[*Rushes over to her*]

MAY [*confused*]. I'm so glad! But, how is it that you're — how well you look! [*Fluttered*]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Eh? well I'm sure!

MAY. Oh! you mustn't mind, Mrs. Willoughby, it's Robert.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Oh — Robert! I suppose, by the way he's a-goin' on, Robert's your brother — leastways, if he ain't your brother —

BRIERLY. Her brother? yes, ma'am, I'm her brother! [*Kisses* MAY]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Indeed! and if I might make bold to ask where you've come from —

BRIERLY. I'm just discharged.

[*He pauses* — MAY *giving him a look.*]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Discharged! and where from — not your situation, I 'ope?

BRIERLY. From Her Majesty's Service, if you must know.

MAY. I've not seen him for three years and more. I didn't expect him so soon, Mrs. Willoughby, so it was quite natural the sight of him should startle me.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Which well I know it — not 'avin' had brothers myself, but an uncle that ran away for a soldier, and came back on the parish with a wooden leg, and a shillin' a day pension, and always in arrears for liquor — which the way that man would drink beer!

BRIERLY. I should have written to prepare you, but I thought I might be here as soon as my letter, so I jumped into the train at Dorchester, and here I am.

MAY. That was very thoughtless of you — no, it was very thoughtful and kind of you. But I don't understand —

Brierly. How I come to be here before the time I told you in my letter? You see, I had full marks and nothing against me, and the regulations —

[May *gives him a look which interrupts him*]

May [*crosses to* Mrs. Willoughby]. If Sam comes shall I tell him to go down stairs to you, Mrs. Willoughby?

Mrs. Willoughby. I shall be much obliged to you, my dear — which I know, when brothers and sisters meet they'll have a great deal to talk over, and two's company and three's none, is well beknown — and I never was one to stand listenin' when other folks is talkin' — and one thing I may say, as I told Mrs. Molloy only last week, when the first floor had a little tiff with the second pair front about the water — "Mrs. Molloy," I says, "nobody ever heard me put in my oar when I wasn't asked," I says, "and idle chatterin' and gossip," I says, "is a thing that I never was given to, and I ain't a-goin' to begin now," I says, which good mornin' to you, young man, and a better girl, and a nicer girl, and a harder workin' girl than your sister, I 'ope and trust may never darken my doors, [Brierly *throws open door*] which her rent was ever ready to the day. No, my dear, it's the truth, and you needn't blush. [*During this last speech* Brierly *gets round and urges her towards door*] Thank you, [*Going to door*] I can open the door for myself, young man. [*Turns to him*] And a very nice looking head you have on your shoulders, though you have had your hair cut uncommon short, which I must say — good mornin', my dear, and anything I can do for you. [*Exit, but is heard still talking till the door below is shut loudly*] I'm sure, which nobody can say but I was always ready to oblige, if reduced to let lodgings owing to a sudden shock.

Brierly. Phew! [*Giving a sigh of relief*] One would think she'd been on the silent system for a twelvemonth! Now, we're alone at last, May. Let me have a good look at you. I gave you a bit of a squeeze, but I hadn't a good look. [*He takes her by the hand.*]

May. Well —

Brierly. Prettier than ever — you couldn't look better or kinder.

May. Now sit down, and don't talk nonsense.

Brierly. Sit down! not I — I've had a good look at you — and I must have a good look at the place. How snug it is! as neat as the cell I've just left. But it wasn't hard to keep *that* in order — I had only a stool, a basin, and a hammock. Didn't I polish the hammock-hooks neither. One must have a pride in something — you know. But here you've no end of things — a sofa — and a carpet — and chairs — and — [*Going round as he speaks*]

May. Isn't it a nice clock, Robert? and look at the cheffonier! I picked that up a bargain — and all out of my own earnings!

Brierly. It's the cosiest little nest for my bird — you *were* a singing bird once, you know. — [*Sees the guitar*] And there's the old bread-winner — I'm glad you've not parted with *that.*

May. I should be the most ungrateful creature if I did! How many a dinner it's earned for me! — how many a week's rent it's paid! But for it I never should have known you — my friend — my brother. Yes, Robert, I wanted to explain to Mrs. Willoughby, when she called you my brother.

Brierly. So did I. But I felt it was true — [*Sits*] If I'm not your brother born and bred, May, you've been a true sister to me — ever since that night —

May. Oh, Robert — a kind word was never lost yet. No wonder I clung to you —

Brierly. Aye, when all stood aloof. In the prison — in the dock — to the van door. But for you, May, I should have been a desperate man. I might have become all they thought me — a felon, in the company of felons.

May. Oh, do not look back to that misery — but tell me how you are out so long before your time?

Brierly. Here's my ticket-of-leave — they've given me every week of my nine months — they hadn't a mark against me — I didn't want to look forward to my discharge — I was afraid to — I worked away; in school, in the quarry-gang first, and in the office afterwards, as if I had to stay there for ever — I wasn't unhappy either — all were good to me. And then I had your letters to comfort me. But when I was sent for to the Governor's room yesterday, and told I was a free man, everything swam

round and round — I staggered — they had to give me water, or I think I should have fainted like a girl.

May. Ah, as I felt that night when you gave me the wine.

Brierly. Poor dear, I remember it, as if it was yesterday. But when I passed out at the gate, not for gang labour, in my prison dress, with my prison mates, under the warder's eye, and the sentry's musket, as I had done so many a weary week — but in my own clothes — unwatched — a free man — free to go where I liked — to do what I liked — speak to whom I liked, [*Rises*] I thought I should have gone crazy — I danced, I sang, I kicked up the pebbles of the Chizzle beach — the boatmen laid hands on me for an escaped lunatic, till I told 'em I was a discharged prisoner, and then they let me pass — but they drew back from me; there was the convict's taint about me — you can't fling that off with the convict's jacket.

May. But here, no one knows you — you'll get a fresh start now.

Brierly. I hope so, but it's awfully up-hill work, May; I've heard enough down yonder of all that stands between a poor fellow who has been in trouble, and an honest life. But just let me get a chance.

May. Oh — if only Mr. Gibson would give you one.

Brierly. Who's he?

May. The husband of the lady who was my first and best friend. [Brierly *looks uneasy*] After you, of course, you jealous thing. It was she gave me work — recommended me to her friends — and now I've quite a nice little business. I pay my way — I'm as happy as the day is long — and I'm thinking of taking an apprentice.

Brierly. How I wish I was a lass. [*Taking her hand*]

May. I think I see those great clumsy hands spoiling my work.

Brierly. You don't want a light porter — eh, May?

May. No — I've not quite business enough for that yet. If Mr. Gibson would only give you employment. He's something in the city.

Brierly. No chance of that, May. I must begin lower down, and when I've got a character, then I may reach a step higher, and so creep back little by little to the level of honest men. [*Gloomily*] There's no help for it.

May [*putting her hands upon his shoulder*]. At all events you can wait and look about you a little — you've money coming in, you know.

Brierly. Me, May?

May. Yes. You forget those two sovereigns you lent me — I've put away a shilling every week out of my savings — and then there's the interest, you know — ever so much. It's all here. [*Goes to table, and coming down on his left, puts a savings-box into his hand*] You needn't count it. There'd have been more if you hadn't come so soon.

Brierly. My good, kind May, do you think I'd touch a farthing of your savings?

May. Oh, do take it, Robert, or I shall be so unhappy — I've had more pleasure out of that money than any I ever earned, because I thought it would go to help you.

Brierly. Bless your kind heart! To think of those little fingers working for me — a lusty, big-boned chap like me! Why, May, lass — I've a matter of twenty pounds in brass of my own earnings at Pentonville and Portland — overtime and allowances. The Governor paid it over to me, like a man, before I started yesterday — aye, and shook hands with me. God bless him for that!

May. Twenty pounds! Oh, how small my poor little earnings will look! I was so proud of them, too — [*Ruefully*]

Brierly. Well, keep 'em, May — keep 'em to buy your wedding-gown.

[*Takes her in his arms and kisses her.*]

[*Enter* Sam — *he gives a significant cough*]

May. Oh! [*Startled*] Sam!

Brierly [*hastily*]. Sam! is it! Confound him! I'll teach him.

[*Crosses, sees it is a boy and pauses*]

Sam. Now will you, though? Granny will be uncommon obliged to you. She says I want teaching — don't she? [*To* May]

May. How dare you come in like that, Sam, without so much as knocking?

Sam. How was I to know you had company? Of course I'd knocked if I'd been aware you'd your young man.

Brierly. I tell you what, young un, if you don't make yourself scarce —

Sam. Well, what? [*Retreating*] If

I don't make myself scarce, you'll pitch into me. Just you try it, [*Squaring*] Lanky! — Yah! Hit one of your own size — do. [*Squaring*]

BRIERLY. Go it, Master Sam! Ha, ha, ha!

SAM. My name's not Sam. It's Samivel Willoughby, Esquire, most respectable references given and required, [*Pulls collar up*] as Granny says when she advertises the first floor.

BRIERLY. Now be off, like a good little chap.

SAM. Come, cheeky! Don't you use bad language. I'm rising fifteen, stand five feet five in my bluchers, and I'm sprouting agin' the summer, if I ain't six foot of greens like *you*.

MAY. Hold your tongue! you're a naughty, impudent little boy.

SAM. Come — I'm bigger than you are, I'll bet a bob. [*Stands on his toes*]

[*Enter* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Oh, here's that boy at last! which upstairs and downstairs, and all along the street, have I been a seekin' of him, [*Throws him over to left*] which, if you'd believe me, Miss Edwards, I left a fourpenny-bit in the chany dog-kennel on the mantelpiece downstairs, only yesterday mornin' as ever was, which if ever there was a real bit of Dresden, and cost me fourteen-and-six at Hanway Yard in 'appier days, with a black and white spaniel in a wreath of roses, and a Shepherdess to match, and the trouble I've 'ad to keep that boy's 'ands off it since he was in long clothes — where's that fourpenny-piece — [*Seizes him*] you young villain — which you know you took it.

SAM. Well, then, I did — to buy bird's-eye with.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Bird's-eye! and him not fifteen — and the only one left of three. [*Falls in chair*]

SAM. If you will nobble a fellow's bacca, you must take the consequences; and just you mind — it ain't no use a-tryin' it on breaking my pipes, Granny. I've given up Broselys and started a briar-root. [*Pulls it out*] It's a stunner.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Oh, dear, oh, dear! if it ain't enough to melt an 'eart of stone — no! fronts I may wear to 'ide my suffering, but my grey 'airs that boy have determined to bring with sorrow to the grave.

SAM. What? Cos I smoke? Why there's Jem Miggles smokes, and he's a year younger than me, and *he's* allowed all the lux'ries of the season — his father's going to take him to see the badger drawn at Jemmy Shaw's one of these days — and *his* mother don't go into hysterics.

MAY. Sam, I'm surprised you should take pleasure in making your grandmother unhappy!

SAM. I don't take pleasure — she won't let me; she's always a naggin' and aggravatin' me. Here, dry your eyes, granny — [*Goes to her*] — and I'll be a good boy, and I won't go after the rats, and I won't aggravate old Miggles's bullfinches.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. And you'll give up that nasty tobacco, and you'll keep your clothes tidy, and not get sliddin' down ladders in your Sunday trowsers — which moleskins won't stand, let alone mixed woolens.

SAM. Best put me in charity leathers at once, with a muffin cap and badge; wouldn't I look stunnin'? Oh, my!

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. There! that's just him — always some of his imperent, audacious chaff — I know he gets it from that young Miggles — ready to stop his poor granny's mouth with.

SAM. No. [*Kisses her*] That's the only way to stop it. Come, I'm goin' to take myself up short, like a jibbin' cab 'oss! and be a real swell, granny, in white kids! only I'm a-waiting till I come into my fortune — *you* know, that twenty pounds you was robbed of, three years ago.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Which robbery is too good a word for it. It was forgery, aye, and a'most as good as murder — which it might ha' been my death! Yes, my dears, as nice-looking, civil-spoken a young man as you would wish to see — in a white 'at, which I never can forget, and a broad way of speaking — and, "Would you change me a twenty pound note, ma'am," he says; "And it ain't very often," I says, "you could have come into this shop" — which I was in the cigar and periodical line at the time.

BRIERLY. Where was your shop?

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. In the Fulham Road, three doors outside the Bell-vue Gardens — "And a note is all the same to me," I sez — "if all correct," I sez — and when I looked in that young man's face, I had no more suspicion than I should of either of yours, my

dears; so he gave me the note, and he took the sovereigns. And the next thing I saw was a gent, which his name he told me was Hawkshaw, and he were in the police, on'y in plain clothes, and asked to look at the note, and told me it was a bad 'un; and if that man left me on the sofa, in the back shop, or behind the counter, with my feet in a jar of brown rappee, and my head among the ginger-beer bottles, is more than I can tell — for fits it was for days and days, and when I worked out of 'em, then I was short of my rent, and the stock sold up, and me ruined.

[Brierly *shews signs of agitation while she is speaking*]

Brierly. And you never recovered your money?

Mrs. Willoughby. Not a penny, my dear, and if it hadn't been for a kind friend that set me up in my own furniture, in the Fulham Workhouse, I might have been at this moment, leastways St. George's, which that's my legal settlement — and that blessed boy — [*She cries*]

Sam [*gaily*]. In a suit of grey dittoes, a-stepping out with another chap, a big 'un and a little 'un together, like a job lot at an auction, to church of a Sunday, to such a jolly long sermon! shouldn't I like it! [*Consolingly, and changing his tone*] I say, don't cry, granny, we ain't come to skilly yet.

Mrs. Willoughby. Which if that young man knew the mischief he'd done.

May. Perhaps he does, and is sorry for it. [*They rise — he goes to back*]

Mrs. Willoughby. Not he, the wretch! What do the likes o' them care for the poor creatures they robs — hangin's too good for 'em, the villains.

Brierly [*taking his hat, and going*]. Good-bye, May.

May. You're not going?

Brierly. I've a little bit of business that can't wait — some money to pay.

May. You'll not be long?

Brierly. No; I'll be back directly. [*Aside*] Thank heaven, I *can* make it up to *her!* [*Exit* Brierly]

May. [*Aside*] Poor fellow! he can't bear it! she little thinks —

Mrs. Willoughby. You'll excuse me, it's not often I talk about it, Miss Edwards, which it's no use a-cryin' over spilt milk, and there's them as tempers the wind to the shorn lamb — and if it wasn't for that boy —

Sam. There, she's at me again.

Mrs. Willoughby. Which if I'd only the means to put him to school, and out of the streets, and clear of that Jim Miggles and them rats —

Sam [*half crying*]. Bother the rats!

May. You see, Sam, how unhappy you make your grandmother.

Sam. And don't you see how unhappy she makes me, talkin' of sendin' me to school.

May [*forcing him to* Mrs. Willoughby]. Come, kiss her, and promise to be a good boy. Ah, Sam, you don't understand the blessing of having one who loves you as she does.

Sam. Then, what does she break my pipes for?

Mrs. Willoughby. Oh, them pipes! [*A knock*]

May. More visitors! What a busy morning this is! Come in!

[*Enter* Mr. Gibson]

Mr. Gibson. Miss Edwards — eh?

May. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gibson. Glad I'm right — I thought it was the third floor front — a woman told me downstairs. I'm afraid I pulled the wrong bell.

[*Looks about him, takes off his hat, gloves, etc.* — May *sets him a chair; he sits*]

Mrs. Willoughby. And a nice way Mrs. Molloy would be in if you brought her down to another party's bell, which, asking your pardon, sir, but was it the first floor as opened the street door?

Mr. Gibson. I don't know. It was a lady in a very broad cap border and still broader brogue.

Mrs. Willoughby. Which that is the party, sir, as I was a-speakin' of; and I do 'ope she didn't fly out, sir, which Mrs. Molloy of a morning — after her tea — she says it's the tea — is that rampageous —

Mr. Gibson. No, no; she was civil enough when I said I wanted Miss Edwards.

Mrs. Willoughby. Which I do believe, my dear, you've bewitched every soul in the 'ouse, from the kitchens to the attics.

Mr. Gibson. Miss Edwards don't confine her witchcraft to your lodgers, my good lady. She's bewitched my wife. My name's Gibson.

MAY. Oh, sir; I've never been able to say what I felt to your good, kind lady; but I hope you will tell her I am grateful.

MR. GIBSON. She knows it by the return you have made. You've showed you deserved her kindness. For fifty people ready to help, there's not one worth helping — that's my conclusion. I was telling my wife so this morning, and she insisted that I should come and satisfy myself that she had helped one person at any rate who was able and willing to help herself, [*Looks at her*] and a very tidy, nice looking girl you are, [*Goes up round table and comes down*] and a very neat, comfortable room you have, I must say.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Which you can tell your good lady, sir, from me, Miss Edwards' rent were always ready to the days and minits — as I was telling her brother just now.

MR. GIBSON. Brother? My wife said you were alone in the world.

MAY. I was alone, sir, when she found me. He was [*She hesitates*] away.

MR. GIBSON [*pointing to* SAM, *who has put down a chair and is balancing himself acrobatically*]. Is this the young gentleman?

[SAM *pitches over with chair, and* MRS. WILLOUGHBY *lugs him up*]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Oh, dear no, sir, begging your pardon, which that is my grandson, Samuel Willoughby, the only one of three, and will be fifteen the twenty-first of next April at eight o'clock in the morning, and a growing boy — which take your cap out of your mouth, Samuel, and stand straight, and let the gentleman see you.

[MR. GIBSON *sits*]

SAM [*sulkily*]. The old gent can see well enough — it don't want a telescope. [*Slinks across at back*] I ain't a-going to be inspected. I'll mizzle. [*Takes flying leap over chair*]

[*Exit* SAM]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Which Miss Edwards' brother is grown up, and only come back this blessed mornin' as ever was, discharged from Her Majesty's Service, and five foot nine in his shoes, by the name of Robert — which, well he may, for a sweeter complexion —

MR. GIBSON. With a good character, I hope.

MAY. Oh, yes! [*Eagerly*] the very best, sir.

[*Re-enter* BRIERLY]

BRIERLY. [*Aside*] I've done it! I can face her now.

MR. GIBSON. So — [*Rises*] I suppose this is Robert, a likely young fellow.

MAY. This is Mr. Gibson, Robert, the husband of the lady who was so good to me.

BRIERLY. Heaven bless her and you too, sir, for your kindness to this poor girl, while I was unable to help her.

MR. GIBSON. But now you've got your discharge, she'll have a protector.

BRIERLY. I hope so, sir — as long as I live, and can earn a crust — I suppose I shall be able to do that.

MR. GIBSON. What do you mean to do?

BRIERLY. Ah, there it is; I wish I knew what I could get to do, sir. There are not many things in the way of work that would frighten me, I think.

MR. GIBSON. That's the spirit I like — your sister speaks well of you, but I shouldn't mind *that*. It's enough for me that you've come out of [BRIERLY *looks startled*] Her Majesty's Service with a good character. [BRIERLY *gives a sigh of relief*] You write a good hand?

[MAY *goes up and round table — gets letters from box — comes down*]

BRIERLY. Tolerably good, sir.

MAY. Beautiful, sir: here are some of his letters — look, sir. [*Going to shew him, but pauses, seeing date of letter*] Portland! — not this, sir. [*Turns page*] This side is better written.

MR. GIBSON. A capital hand. Can you keep accounts?

BRIERLY. Yes, sir, I helped to keep the books — yonder.

[*Re-enter* SAM, *who comes over rapidly at back, to* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

SAM. Holloa, granny, here's a parcel I found for you in the letter-box — ain't it heavy, neither.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. For me? [*Takes it*] Whatever is it? Eh! money? Oh! Sam, you ha'n't been and gone and done anything wrong?

SAM. Bother! Do you think if I had I'd a come to *you* with the swag?

[MRS. WILLOUGHBY, *who has opened the packet, screams, and lets a paper fall from the packet*]

MAY. What's the matter, Mrs. Willoughby?

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Sovereigns! real golden sovereigns!

MAY.
MR. GIBSON. } Sovereigns!

SAM. Oh, crikey!

[*Goes up and down in exultation*]

MAY [*picks up the paper* MRS. WILLOUGHBY *has let fall*]. Here's a note — "For Mrs. Willoughby — £20 in payment of an old debt."

MR. GIBSON [*who has seated himself and begun to write, rises and comes down*]. Yes, and no signature. Come, don't faint, old lady! Here, give her a glass of water. [*To* MAY]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY [*recovering*]. Sovereigns! for me? Oh, sir, let me look at 'em — the beauties — eight, nine, ten, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, twenty! Just the money I lost.

SAM. There, granny — I always said we was comin' into our fortune.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY [*with a sudden flash of doubt*]. I shouldn't wonder if it was some nasty ring-dropper. Oh! are they Bank of Elegance, or only gilt washed? Which I've seen 'em at London Bridge a-sellin' sovereigns at a penny a-piece.

MR. GIBSON. Oh, no! they're the real thing.

BRIERLY. Perhaps it's somebody that's wronged you of the money and wants you to clear his conscience.

MR. GIBSON. Ah! eccentric people will do that sort of thing — even with income tax. Take my advice, old lady, keep the cash.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Which in course a gentleman like you knows best, and I'm sure whoever sent the money, all I wish is, much good may it do him, and may he never know the want of it.

BRIERLY. Amen!

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Which, first and foremost — there's my silver teapot, I'll have out of pawn this blessed day, and I'll ask Mrs. Molloy to a cup of tea in my best blue chaney, and then this blessed boy shall have a year of finishin' school.

SAM. I wish the party had kept his money, I do! [MRS. WILLOUGHBY *is counting the sovereigns over and over*] I say, granny, you couldn't spare a young chap a couple of them, could you?

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Drat the boy's imperence! Him askin' for sovereigns as natural — Ah! they'll all be for you, Sam, one of these days.

SAM. I should like a little in advance.

[SAM *makes a grab at the sovereigns playfully, and runs, followed by* MRS. WILLOUGHBY, *whom he dodges behind a chair* — MR. GIBSON *writes at table*].

MRS. WILLOUGHBY [*half-hysterically, throwing herself into a chair*]. Oh! Sam, which that boy will be the death of his poor grandmother, he will.

SAM [*jumping over chair-back, on which he perches, gives back money and kisses her*]. There, granny, it was only a lark.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY [*admiringly and affectionately*]. Oh, what a boy you are!

[*Exeunt* MRS. WILLOUGHBY *and* SAM]

MR. GIBSON [*gives note to* BRIERLY]. Here, young man, bring this note to my office, 25 St. Nicholas-lane, at ten o'clock to-morrow. I've discharged my messenger — we'll see if you are fit for the place.

BRIERLY. Oh, sir!

MR. GIBSON. There — there — don't thank me. [*Crosses to* MAY] I like gratitude that shews itself in acts like yours to my wife. Let's hope your brother will repay me in the same coin. [*Exit*]

MAY. Robert, the money has brought us a blessing already.

[*He takes her in his arms exultingly — music, piano*]

END OF SECOND ACT

ACT III

SCENE. — MR. GIBSON'S *Bill-broking Office in Nicholas-lane, City — a mahogany railing runs up the stage, separating compartment (in which stand across the stage two large mahogany desks, set round with wire and a brass rail at the top to support books) from the compartment at the side of which is the door leading to* MR. GIBSON'S *private office — in front of the compartment runs a mahogany counter, with a place for writing at, divided off — a large iron safe for books — another safe near door — door communicating with passage*

and street — a small desk down stage — two windows].

[*As the curtain rises*, SAM *is discovered carrying the ledgers out of safe, through an entrance in the railing to compartment, and arranging them on the desks* — BRIERLY *is discovered at the counter numbering cheques in a cheque-book*]

SAM. There they are, all ship-shape. I say, Bob, if granny could see these big chaps, [*Whilst carrying ledgers*] all full of £ *s d*, and me as much at home with them as old Miggles with his toy terriers. [*Puts books on desk and returns*]

BRIERLY. Only the outsides, Sam — fifty — fifty-one —

SAM. Everything must have a beginning. I'm only under messenger now, at six bob a week — but it's the small end of the wedge. I don't mean to stay running errands and dusting books long, I can tell you. I intend to speculate — I'm in two tips already.

BRIERLY. Tips?

SAM. Yes. [*Takes out betting book*] I stand to win a fiver on Pollux for the Derby, and a good thing on the Count for the Ascot Cup — they were at Pollux last week, but he's all right again, and the Count's in splendid form, and the stable uncommon sweet on him.

BRIERLY. Bring me those pens. [*As* SAM *comes to him with the pens he catches him by the collar and shakes him*] You young rascal! — Now, you mark me, Master Sam. If ever I hear of you putting into a tip again, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life, and then I'll split on you to Mr. Gibson, and he'll discharge you.

SAM. Now I call that mean. One City gent interfering with another City gent's amusements.

BRIERLY [*bitterly*]. Amusements! When you've seen as much as I have, you'll know what comes of such amusements, lad.

SAM. As if I didn't know well enough already. Lark, lush, and a latch-key — a swell rig out, and lots of ready in the pockets — a drag at Epsom, and a champagne lunch on the hill! Oh, my — ain't it stunning!

BRIERLY. Ah! Sam, that's the fancy picture — mine is the true one. Excitement first, then idleness and drink, and then bad companions — sin — shame — and a prison.

SAM. Come, I don't want to be preached to in office hours — Granny gives me quite enough of that at home — ain't it a bore, just!

BRIERLY. Oh, my lad, take my advice, do! Be steady — stick to work and home. It's an awful look-out for a young chap adrift in this place, without them sheet-anchors. [*Returns to counter*]

SAM. Oh, I ain't afraid. I cut my eye-teeth early. Tips ain't worse than time bargains — and they're business. [*Crosses at back*] But don't look glum, Bob, you're the right sort, you are, and sooner than rile you I'll cut tips, burn "Bell's Life," and take to Capel Court and the "Share List," and that's respectable, you know. [*Sits on counter*]

BRIERLY [*looking over cheque book*]. You young rascal! you've made me misnumber my cheques.

SAM. Serves you jolly well right, for coming to business on your wedding day.

BRIERLY. Oh! I've two hours good before I'm wanted for that.

SAM. I say, Bob, you don't mean to say you've been to the Bank for the petty cash this morning?

BRIERLY. Yes.

SAM. And didn't leave the notes on the counter?

BRIERLY. No.

SAM. And didn't have your pocket picked?

BRIERLY. No.

SAM. Well, you *are* a cool hand. I've often wondered how the poor chaps in Newgate managed to eat a good breakfast before they're turned off. But a fellow coming to office the morning he's going to be spliced — and when the Governor has given him a holiday, too — by Jove, it beats the Old Bailey by lengths. I hope I shall be as cool when I'm married.

BRIERLY. You — you young cock-sparrow!

SAM. Yes. I've ordered the young woman I want down at Birmingham. Miss Edwards ain't my style.

BRIERLY. No — isn't she though? I'm sorry it's too late to have her altered.

SAM. She's too quiet — wants go. I like high action. Now I call Mrs. Jones a splendid woman. Sam Willoughby, Esquire, must have a real tip-top lady. I don't mean to marry

till I can go to church with my own brougham.

BRIERLY. I surpose that means when you've set up as a crossing sweeper. And now, Sam, till your brougham comes round for you, just trot off to the stationer's and see if Mr. Gibson's new bill-case is ready.

SAM [*vaulting over the counter, sees* MAY *through the glass door*]. All right. Here's Miss Edwards a-coming in full tog. I twig — I ain't wanted. Quite correct — Samivel is fly.

[*Puts his finger to his nose and Exit*]

[*Enter* MAY *in wedding dress*]

BRIERLY. Ah, May, darling!

[*Takes her by the hand and kisses her*]

SAM [*looking in*]. I saw you! [*Exit*]

BRIERLY. Hang that boy! But never mind his impudence, my own little wife.

MAY. Not yet, sir.

BRIERLY. In two hours.

MAY. There's many a slip between the cup and the lip, you know. But as the clerks aren't come yet, I thought I might just look in and shew you —

[*Displays her dress*]

BRIERLY. Your wedding gown!

MAY. Yes. It's Mrs. Gibson's present, with such a kind note — and she insists on providing the wedding breakfast — and she's sent in the most beautiful cake, and flowers from their own conservatory. My little room looks so pretty.

BRIERLY. It always looks pretty when thou art in it. I shall never miss the sun, even in Nicholas Lane, after we are married, darling.

MAY. Oh! Robert, won't it be delightful? Me, housekeeper here, and you, messenger, and such a favourite too! And to think we owe all to these good, kind, generous — There's only one thing I can't get off my mind.

BRIERLY. What's that?

MAY. Mr. Gibson doesn't know the truth about you. We should have told him before this.

BRIERLY. It's hard for a poor chap that's fought clear of the mud, to let go the rope he's holding to and slide back again. I'll tell him when I've been long enough here to try me, only wait a bit.

MAY. Perhaps you are right, dear. Sometimes the thought comes like a cloud across me. But you've never said how you like my dress.

[*Displaying it*]

BRIERLY. I couldn't see it for looking at thy bonny face — but it's a grand gown.

MAY. And my own making! I forgot — Mrs. Jones is come, and Mrs. Willoughby. They're going to church with us, you know — Emily looks so nice — she would so like to see the office, she says, if I might bring her in?

BRIERLY. Oh, yes! the place is free to the petticoats till business hours.

MAY [*crosses and calls at door*]. Come in, Emily.

[*Enter* MRS. GREEN JONES]

EMILY. Oh! Mr. Brierly.

MAY. While Robert does the honours of the office, I'll go and help Mrs. Willoughby to set out the breakfast. The white service looks so lovely, Robert, and my canary sings as I haven't heard him since I left the old lodgings. He knows there's joy in the wind.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY [*calling without*]. Miss Edwards!

MAY. There! I'm wanted. I'm coming, Mrs. Willoughby. Oh, dear! If I'd known the trouble it was to be married, I don't think I should have ventured. I'm coming. [*Exit*]

EMILY [*who has been looking about her*]. I did *so* want to see an office — a real one, you know. I've seen 'em set on the stage often, but they ain't a bit like the real thing.

BRIERLY. They are but dull places. Not this one, though, since May's been housekeeper.

EMILY. Yes, they are dull, but *so* respectable — look so like money, you know. I suppose, now, there's no end of money passes here?

BRIERLY. A hundred thousand pounds a day, sometimes.

EMILY. Gracious goodness! All in sovereigns?

BRIERLY. Not a farthing — all in cheques and bills. We've a few thousands, that a queer, old-fashioned depositor insists on Mr. Gibson keeping here, but, except that, and the petty cash, there's no hard money in the place.

EMILY. Dear me! I thought you City people sat on stools all day shovelling sovereigns about. Not that I

could bear to think of Jones sitting on a stool all day, even to shovel about sovereigns, though he always says something in the City would suit him better than the comic duet business. But he doesn't know what's good for him — never did, poor fellow.

BRIERLY. Except when he married you.

EMILY. Well, I don't know about that, but I suppose he would have got through the property without me — he's so much the gentleman, you know.

BRIERLY. He's coming to church with us?

EMILY. Oh, yes! You know he's to give away the bride. But he was obliged to keep an appointment in the City first; so queer for Jones, wasn't it? He wouldn't tell me what it was.

GREEN [*heard without*]. Two and six, my man. Very good, wait.

BRIERLY. Here's your husband!

EMILY [*looking through door*]. In a cab — and a new coat, and waistcoat, and trousers! Oh, Jones! Well, I sha'n't pay for them.

[*Enter* GREEN JONES *in a gorgeous new suit*]

GREEN [*speaking off*]. Now, hand me out those parcels — yah, stupid, give me hold. [*Hands in parcels one by one*] Here, bear a hand.

[*He pitches parcels to* BRIERLY, *who pitches them on to* MRS. GREEN JONES, *who deposits them on the counter*]

EMILY. [*As first bonnet box comes in*] Jones! [*As second bonnet box comes in*] Green! [*As case of Eau-de-Cologne comes in*] Green Jones! [*Glove box comes in*] Oh! [*Two bouquets in paper are given in*] Gracious goodness!

GREEN. There — all out. Let's see — bonnets, Eau-de-Cologne, gloves, bouquets — seven ten; two and six the cab — my own togs, five ten — that's thirteen two and six in all.

EMILY. Jones, are you mad?

GREEN. Is your principal here, Brierly?

BRIERLY. The Governor? No, it's not his time yet.

GREEN. [*En attendant*] You couldn't advance me thirteen two six, could you?

BRIERLY. What! lend you the money? I'm afraid —

EMILY [*reproachfully*]. Oh, Jones!

GREEN. Emily, be calm. It's not the least consequence. They can wait — the shopman, I mean — that is — the two shopmen and cabby.

EMILY. Oh, he's gone crazy!

GREEN. The fact is, I've had a windfall. Choker Black has turned up trumps. He was put in the hole in California's year, had to bolt to Australia — struck an awfully full pocket at the diggings, and is paying off his old ticks like an emperor. He let me in for two thousand, and he has sent me bills for five hundred, as a first instalment.

EMILY. Five hundred! And you've got the money?

GREEN. I've got the bills on his agent. Here they are. Emily, embrace your husband! [*He kisses her*]

BRIERLY. I wish you joy — both of you. Mr. Gibson will discount the bills for you as soon as he comes in.

GREEN. But, I say, cash, you know, no curious sherry — no old masters, or patent filters — I've had rather too much of that sort of thing in my time.

EMILY [*who has been peeping into bonnet box*]. What a duck of a bonnet!

BRIERLY. No, you're not among your old sixty per cent. friends here. We only do good bills at the market rate.

EMILY [*who has opened glove box*]. And what loves of gloves!

GREEN. That's your sort. I feel now the full value of the commercial principle.

EMILY. Oh, Green! But you'll be careful of the money?

GREEN. Careful! I'm an altered man. Henceforth I swear — you'll allow me to register a vow in your office? — to devote myself to the virtuous pursuit of money-making. I'm worth five hundred pounds, I've fifteen hundred more coming in. — Not one farthing of that money shall go in foolish extravagance.

EMILY. But how about these things, Jones?

GREEN. Trifles; — a *cadeau de noce* for the ladies, and a case of Eau-de-Cologne for myself. I've been running to seed so long, and want watering so much.

[*Sprinkles himself with Eau-de-Cologne*]

EMILY. Oh dear, Green! I'm afraid you're as great a fool as ever.

BRIERLY. Nay, nay, Mrs. Jones —

no man's a fool with £500 in his pocket. But here come the clerks; — band-boxes and bouquets ain't businesslike. You must carry these down to May.

GREEN [*loading* EMILY *with the parcels*]. Beg her acceptance of a bonnet, a bouquet, and a box of Piver's seven and a quarter; — and accept the same yourself, from yours ever affectionately, G. J.

[*Tries to kiss her over the parcels but cannot*]

EMILY [*from over the parcels*]. Oh, go along with your nonsense! I'll give you one down stairs. [*Exit*]

[*Enter* MR. BURTON *and* MR. SHARPE, *clerks*]

SHARPE. Good morning. Governor come yet?

BRIERLY. Not yet, Mr. Sharpe; it's getting near his time, though.

[CLERKS *hang up their hats, coats, etc., and seat themselves at desks*]

SHARPE. [*To* MR. GREEN JONES] Can we do anything for you, sir?

BRIERLY [*indicating* GREEN JONES]. This gentleman's waiting to see Mr. Gibson. Here he is.

[*Enter* MR. GIBSON]

MR. GIBSON [*rubbing his feet on the mat*]. Good morning, morning, Mr. Sharpe — good morning, Burton. Well, Robert — didn't expect to find you at the office this morning.

BRIERLY. Here's a gentleman waiting for you, sir, on business.

MR. GIBSON. If you'll walk into my room, sir?

[*Exit* GREEN JONES *into* MR. GIBSON'S *room*]

BRIERLY. I thought I might as well number the cheques, sir, and go for the petty cash. Somehow, I felt I shouldn't like anything to go wrong to-day.

MR. GIBSON. Well, that's a very proper feeling. I hope May likes my wife's present. She is a first-rate housekeeper; though she *did* call *you* her brother, the little rogue — and I've every reason to be satisfied with you.

BRIERLY. I'm right proud of that, sir.

MR. GIBSON. You won't mind my giving you a word of advice on your wedding-day? Go on as you've begun — keep a bright eye and an enquiring tongue in your head — learn how business is done — watch the market — and from what I've seen of you the six months you've been here, I shouldn't wonder if I found a better berth than messenger for you one of these days.

BRIERLY. Mr. Gibson — sir — I can't thank you — but a look-out like that — it takes a man's breath away.

MR. GIBSON. In the City there's no gap between the first round of the ladder and the top of the tree. But that gentleman's waiting. [*Pauses — goes to door*] By-the-way! I expect a call from a Mr. Hawkshaw.

BRIERLY [*starting*]. Hawkshaw!

MR. GIBSON. Yes, the famous detective. Shew him in when he comes. I've a particular appointment with him.

[*Exit* MR. GIBSON *into his own room*]

BRIERLY. Hawkshaw coming here! The principal witness against me at my trial. Perhaps he won't know me — I'm much changed. But they say, at Portland, he never forgets a face. If he knows me, and tells Mr. Gibson, he'll discharge me — and, to-day, just when we looked to be so happy! It would break May's heart. But why should I stay? I'm free for the day — I will not wait to meet my ruin. [*Going*]

[*Enter* HAWKSHAW]

HAWKSHAW. Mr. Gibson within?

BRIERLY. Yes, sir, but he has a gentleman with him.

HAWKSHAW. Take in my name.

[*Writes on a card with pencil and gives it to* BRIERLY]

BRIERLY [*takes card and, crossing, sees name on it — Aside*]. Hawkshaw! It is too late! Would you like to look at the paper, sir?

[*Offers him one from desk*]

HAWKSHAW [*as he takes it, gives a keen look of recognition at* BRIERLY, *who shrinks under his eye, but represses his agitation by an effort*]. I've seen you before, I think?

BRIERLY. I don't recollect you, sir.

HAWKSHAW [*carelessly*]. Perhaps I'm wrong — though I've a good memory for faces. Take in my card. [BRIERLY *goes off with card*] It's Dalton's pal — the youngster who got four years for passing forged Bank of England paper, at the Bellevue Tea Gardens. I owe Master Dalton one for that night yet. Back from Portland, eh? Looks all the better for his

schooling. But Portland's an odd shop to take an office messenger from. I wonder if his employer got his character from his last place.

[*Re-enter* Brierly]

Brierly. Mr. Gibson will see you in a moment, sir.

Hawkshaw. Very well.

[*Gives him a look*]

[*Re-enter* Green Jones *from* Mr. Gibson's *room, with check*]

Green. [*To* Brierly] All right! Market rate — and no old masters. I'll drive to the bank — cash this — settle with those counter-skippers, and rattle back in time to see you turned off. I say — you must allow me to order a little dinner at the "Star and Garter", and drive you down — all right, you know. Mail phaeton and pair — your wife and my wife. I want to show you the style G. J. *used* to do it in. [*Goes up*] Now, cabby, pull round — [*Speaking loudly*] — London Joint Stock Bank — best pace.

[*Exit* Green Jones]

Brierly. [*Aside*] He little thinks what may be hanging over me.

Mr. Gibson [*appearing at the door of his room*]. Now, Mr. Hawkshaw, I'm at your service.

Hawkshaw [*returning* Brierly *the paper*]. Cool case of note-passing, that at Bow-street, yesterday. [Brierly *winces — aside*] It's my man, sure enough. [*Exit into* Gibson's *room*]

Brierly. He knows me — I can read it in his face — his voice. He'll tell Mr. Gibson! Perhaps he's telling him now! — I wish I'd spoken to him — but they have no mercy. Oh, if I'd only made a clean breast of it to Mr. Gibson before this!

[*Enter* Gibson *and* Hawkshaw *from* Mr. Gibson's *room*]

Mr. Gibson. [*To first clerk*] Mr. Sharpe, will you go round to the banks and see what's doing? [Sharpe *takes his hat and exits*] Mr. Burton, you'll be just in time for morning's clearance.

Burton [*Getting his hat — Aside*]. By Jove! the Governor wants to make a morning's clearance of us, I think. I'm half an hour too soon for the Clearing House. Time for a tip-top game at billiards. [*Exit*]

Mr. Gibson. Robert!

[*Writing at desk*]

Brierly. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gibson. Before you leave, just step round into Glynn's and get me cash for this. You'll have time enough before you're wanted downstairs, you rascal.

Brierly. [*Aside*] He knows nothing. [*Aloud*] I'll be back in five minutes, sir.

[*As* Gibson *is about to give him the cheque,* Hawkshaw, *who is standing between* Gibson *and* Brierly, *interposes, and takes cheque carelessly*]

Hawkshaw. Your messenger, eh?

Mr. Gibson. Yes.

Hawkshaw. Had him long?

Mr. Gibson. Six months.

Hawkshaw. Good character?

Mr. Gibson. Never had a steadier, soberer, better-behaved lad in the office.

Hawkshaw. Had you references with him?

Mr. Gibson. Why, I think I took him mainly on the strength of his own good looks and his sweetheart's. An honest face is the best testimonial after all.

Hawkshaw. H'm — neither is always to be relied on.

Mr. Gibson. You detectives would suspect your own fathers. Why, how you look at the lad. Come, you've never had *him* through your hands.

[*A pause*]

Hawkshaw. No, he's quite a stranger to me. [*Turns away*] Here's the cheque, young man. Take care you make no mistake about it.

Brierly. [*Aside, going*] Saved! saved! Heaven bless him for those words. [*Exit*]

Hawkshaw. [*Aside*] Poor devil, he's paid his debt at Portland. [*Aloud*] Now to business. You say a bill drawn by Vanzeller & Co., of Penang, on the London Joint Stock Bank, was presented for discount here, last night, which you know to be a forgery?

Mr. Gibson. Yes. As it was after hours the clerk told the presenter to call this morning.

Hawkshaw. Bill forging is tip-top work. The man who did this job knows what he's about. We mustn't alarm him. What time did the clerk tell him to call?

Mr. Gibson. At eleven.

Hawkshaw. It's within five minutes. You go to your room. I'll take my place at one of these desks as a

clerk, and send the customers in to you. When the forged bill is presented, you come to the door and say, loud enough for me to hear — "Vanzeller and Co., Penang," — and leave the rest to me.

Mr. Gibson [*nervously*]. Hadn't I better have assistance within call?

Hawkshaw. Oh dear no — I like to work single-handed — but don't be excited. Take it coolly, or you may frighten the bird. [*Goes to desk*]

Mr. Gibson. Easy to say take it coolly! I haven't been thief catching all my life.

[*Exit* Gibson *into his room*]

[*Enter* Moss]

Moss [*at the counter, getting out his bills*]. Let me see — Spelter and Wayne. Fifty, ten, three — thirty days after sight. That's commercial. [*Examining another bill*] For two hundred at two months — drawn by Captain Crabbs — accepted the Honourable Augustus Greenway: that's a thirty per center. Better try that at another shop. [*Takes out another*] Mossop and Mills — good paper — ninety-nine, eight, two — at sixty days. That'll do here.

Mr. Gibson. [*At door of his room*] Mr. Hawkshaw!

Hawkshaw. H—sh!

[*Warns him against using his name, but obeys his call, and goes in*]

Moss [*on hearing name*]. Hawkshaw! [*With a quick glance as* Hawkshaw *passes into* Mr. Gibson's *room*] A detective here! Ware — hawk! [*Alarmed, but recovering*] Well, it ain't for me — I'm all on the square, now. If bills will go missing — it ain't me that steals 'em — Tiger does that — I'm always a *boná fide* holder for value — I can face any examination, I can. But I should like to know Hawkshaw's little game, and I shouldn't mind spoiling it. [*Re-enter* Hawkshaw] Mr. Gibson, if you please?

Hawkshaw. He's in his office, sir. [*As* Moss *passes in he recognises him. — Exit* Moss] Melter Moss here! Can he be the forger? He heard my name. Dear, dear, to think that a business-man like Mr. Gibson should be green enough to call a man like me by his name. [*Re-enter* Moss] Here he comes; now for the signal.

[*Goes to desk*]

Moss [*coming down with cheques and bill book*]. All right! Beautiful paper, most of it. One, two of 'em fishy. Well, I'll try *them* three doors down — they ain't so particular.

Hawkshaw. [*Aside*] No signal!

Moss. [*In front of counter*] If you'll allow me, I'll take a dip of your ink, young man — I've an entry to make in my bill book. — [Hawkshaw *pitches him a pen*] Thank you.

[Moss *writes*]

[*Enter* Dalton, *dressed as a respectable elderly commercial man, in as complete contrast as possible with his appearance in First Act*]

Dalton. Mr. Gibson?

[*Takes out his bill case*]

Hawkshaw. [*At desk*] You'll find him in his office, sir.

Dalton. [*Aside*] That's not the young man I saw here yesterday afternoon. [*Aloud*] Let me see first that I've got the bill.

[*Rummages for bill*]

Moss [*recognising* Dalton]. Tiger here, in his City get-up. Oh, oh! If this should be Hawkshaw's little game! I'll drop him a line.

[*Writes, and passes paper secretly to* Dalton, *with a significant look, and taking care to keep behind the railing of the counter*]

Dalton [*recognising him*]. Moss! [*Taking paper, reads*] "Hawkshaw's at that desk." Forewarned, forearmed!

[*Goes up*]

Moss [*goes up*]. There, I hope I've spoiled Hawkshaw's little game.

[*Exit* Moss]

[Mr. Gibson *appears at door of office*]

Mr. Gibson. [*About to address* Hawkshaw *again*] Mr. —

Hawkshaw [*hastily interrupting him*]. H'sh! a party wants to see you, sir, if you could step this way, for a moment.

Dalton. Would you oblige me, Mr. Gibson, by looking very particularly at this bill?

[*Gives it to* Gibson, *who comes down*]

Mr. Gibson. "Vanzeller and Co., Penang." [*Glances at* Hawkshaw, *aside, who crosses and seats himself at desk*] He don't stir! "Vanzeller and Co., Penang." [*Aside*] Confound it, I haven't made a blunder, have I! "Vanzeller and Co., Penang."

[HAWKSHAW *prepares handcuffs under the desk*]

DALTON. Yes, a most respectable firm. But all's not gold that glitters; I thought the paper as safe as you do; but, unluckily, I burnt my fingers with it once before. You may or may not remember my presenting a bill drawn by the same firm for discount two months ago.

MR. GIBSON. Yes, particularly well.

DALTON. Well, sir, I have now discovered that was a forgery.

MR. GIBSON. So have I.

DALTON. And I'm sadly afraid, between you and me. — By the way, I hope I may speak safely before your clerk?

MR. GIBSON. Oh, quite.

DALTON. I'm almost satisfied that this bill is a forgery, too. The other has been impounded, I hear. My object in coming here yesterday was, first to verify, if possible, the forgery in the case of this second bill; and next, to ask your assistance, as you had given value for the first as well as myself, in bringing the forger to justice.

[HAWKSHAW *looks up as in doubt*]

MR. GIBSON. Really, sir, —

DALTON. Oh, my dear sir! If we City men don't stand by each other in these rascally cases! But before taking any other step, there is one thing I owe to myself, as well as to you, and that is to repay you the amount of the first forged bill.

MR. GIBSON. But you said you had given value for it?

DALTON. The more fool I! But if I am to pay twice, that is no reason you should be a loser. I've a memorandum of the amount here. [*Looks at his bill-book*] Two hundred and twenty — seven — five. Here are notes — two hundreds — a ten — and two fives — seven — and one — two — three. [*Counting out copper*]

MR. GIBSON. Oh! pray, sir, don't trouble yourself about the coppers.

DALTON. I'm particular in these matters. Excuse me — it's a little peculiarity of mine — [*Counting out coppers*] — three — four — five. There! that's off my conscience! But you've not examined the notes.

[HAWKSHAW *pockets handcuffs*]

MR. GIBSON. Oh, my dear sir.

[*Putting them up*]

DALTON. Ah! careless, careless! [*Shakes his head*] Luckily, I *had* endors'd 'em.

MR. GIBSON. Really, sir, I had marked that two hundred and twenty off to a bad debt a month ago. By the way, I have not the pleasure of knowing your name.

DALTON. Wake, sir — Theopilus Wake, of the firm of Wake Brothers, shippers and wharfingers, Limehouse and Dock-street, Liverpool. We have a branch establishment at Liverpool. Here's our card. [*Gives card*]

MR. GIBSON. So far from expecting you to repay the money, I thought you were coming to bleed me afresh with forged bill No. 2 — for a forgery it is, most certainly.

DALTON. Quite natural, my dear sir, quite natural — I've no right to feel the least hurt.

MR. GIBSON. And what's more, I had a detective at that desk ready to pounce upon you.

DALTON. No, really!

MR. GIBSON. You can drop the clerk, now, Mr. Hawkshaw.

[HAWKSHAW *comes down*]

DALTON. Hawkshaw! Have I the honour to address Mr. Hawkshaw, the detective, the hero of the great gold dust robberies, and the famous Trunk-line-transfer forgeries? [*Crosses*]

HAWKSHAW. I'm the man, sir. I believe — [*Modestly*]

DALTON. Sir, the whole commercial world owes you a debt of gratitude it can never repay. I shall have to ask your valuable assistance in discovering the author of the audacious forgeries.

HAWKSHAW. Have you any clue?

DALTON. I believe they are the work of a late clerk of ours — who got into gay company, poor lad, and has gone to the bad. He knew the Vanzellers' signature, as they were old correspondents of ours.

HAWKSHAW. Is the lad in London?

DALTON. He was within a week.

HAWKSHAW. Can you give me a description of him? Age — height — hair — eyes — complexion — last address — haunts — habits — associates — [*Significantly*] — any female connexion?

DALTON. Unluckily I know very little of him personally. My partner, Walter Wake, can supply all the information you want.

HAWKSHAW. Where shall I find him?

DALTON. Here's our card. We'll take a cab and question him at our office. Or [*As if struck by a sudden thought*] suppose you bring him here — so that we may all lay our heads together.

HAWKSHAW. You'll not leave this office till I come back?

DALTON. If Mr. Gibson will permit me to wait.

MR. GIBSON. I shall feel extremely obliged to you.

HAWKSHAW. You may expect me back in half an hour at fartherest — [*Going, returns*] — egad, sir, you've had a narrow escape. I had the darbies open under the desk.

[*Showing handcuffs*]

DALTON. Ha, ha, ha! how very pleasant.

[*Takes and examines handcuffs curiously*]

HAWKSHAW. But I'll soon be down on this youngster.

MR. GIBSON. If only he hasn't left London.

HAWKSHAW. Bless you — they can't leave London. Like the moths, they turn and turn about the candle till they burn the wings.

DALTON. Ah! thanks to men like you. How little society is aware of what it owes its detective benefactors.

HAWKSHAW. There's the satisfaction of doing one's duty — and something else, now and then.

MR. GIBSON. Ah! a good, round reward.

HAWKSHAW. That's not bad; but there's something better than that.

DALTON. Indeed!

HAWKSHAW. Paying off old scores. Now, if I could only clinch the darbies on Jem Dalton's wrists.

DALTON. Dalton! What's your grudge against him in particular?

HAWKSHAW. He was the death of my pal — the best mate I ever had — poor Joe Skirrit. [*Draws his hands across his eyes*] I shall never work with such another.

MR. GIBSON. Did he murder him?

HAWKSHAW. Not to say murdered him right out. But he spoiled him — gave him a clip on the head with a neddy — a life-preserver. He was never his own man afterwards. He left the force on a pension, but he grew sort of paralysed, and then got queer in his head. I was sitting with him the week before he died — "Jack," he says, — it was Joe and Jack with us, — "Jack," he says, "I lay my death at the Tiger's door" — that was the name we had for Dalton in the force. "You'll look after him, Jack," he says, "for the sake of your old mate." By ——, no, I won't say what I said, but I promised him to be even with Jem Dalton, and I'll keep my word.

DALTON. You know this Dalton?

HAWKSHAW. Know him! He has as many outsides as he has aliases. You may identify him for a felon today, and pull your hat off to him for a parson to-morrow. But I'll hunt him out of all his skins; — and my best night's sleep will be the day I've brought Jem Dalton to the dock!

DALTON. Mr. Hawkshaw, I wish you every success!

HAWKSHAW. But I've other fish to fry now. [*Going up, looks at card*] Wake Brothers, Buckle's Wharf, Limehouse. [*Exit* HAWKSHAW]

DALTON. Ask anybody for our office. [*Aside*] And if anybody can tell you I *shall* be astonished.

[*Following him up, then returning*]

MR. GIBSON. I'm really ashamed to keep you waiting, sir.

DALTON. Oh, I can write my letters here. [*Pointing to the counter*] If you don't mind trusting me all alone in your office.

MR. GIBSON. My dear sir, if you were Dalton himself — the redoubtable Tiger — you couldn't steal ledgers and day-books, and there's nothing more valuable here — except, by the way, my queer old depositor, Miss Faddle's, five thousand, that she insists on my keeping here in the office in gold, as she believes neither in banks nor banknotes. — And, talking of notes, I may as well lock up these you so handsomely paid me. [*Goes to safe*]

DALTON. Not believe in notes! Infatuated woman! [*Aside*] I hope he'll like mine.

MR. GIBSON [*locks safe*]. I'll leave you to write your letters.

[*Exit* MR. GIBSON *into his office*]

DALTON. Phew! [*Whistles low*] That's the narrowest shave I ever had. So, Jack Hawkshaw, you'll be even with Jem Dalton yet, will you? You may add this day's work to the score against him. How the old boy swallowed my soft sawder and Brummagem notes! They're beauties! It would be a pity to leave them in his

hands — and five thousand shiners, p'raps, alongside of 'em. Come — I've my wax handy — never travel without my tools. Here goes for a squeeze at the lock of this safe.

[*Goes to safe, and by means of a pick-lock applies wax to the wards of the lock by the key-hole. Music, piano*]

[*Enter* BRIERLY]

BRIERLY [*hangs up hat*]. Clerks not returned. Hawkshaw gone? [*Sees* DALTON *at safe*] Holloa! who's this? Tampering with the safe! — Hold hard there! [*He seizes* DALTON, *who turns*]

DALTON. [*Aside*] Brierly! Hands off, young 'un. Don't you know a locksmith when you see him?

BRIERLY. Gammon! Who are you? How came you here? What are you doing with that safe?

DALTON. You ask a great deal too many questions.

BRIERLY. I'll trouble you to answer 'em.

DALTON. By what right?

BRIERLY. I'm messenger in this office, and I've a right to know who touches a lock here.

DALTON. You messenger here? Indeed! and suppose I took to asking questions — you mightn't be so keen of answering yourself — Robert Brierly!

BRIERLY. You know me!

DALTON. Yes. And your character from your last place — Port —

BRIERLY [*terrified*]. Hush!

DALTON. Your hair hasn't grown so fast but I can see traces of the prison-crop.

BRIERLY. For mercy's sake!

DALTON. Silence for silence. Ask me no questions and I'll press for no answers.

BRIERLY. You must explain your business here to Mr. Gibson. I suspected you for a thief.

DALTON. And I know you for a jail-bird. Let's see whose information will go the farthest. There, I'll make you a fair offer, Robert Brierly. Let me pass, and I leave this place without breathing a word to your employer that you're fresh from a sentence of penal servitude for four years. Detain me, and I denounce you for the convict you are! [*A knock at the door*]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. [*Without*] Mr. Brierly!

BRIERLY. Hush! Coming, Mrs. Willoughby.

DALTON. Is it a bargain?

BRIERLY. Go — go — anything to escape this exposure.

[*Giving him his hat, etc., from counter*]

DALTON. [*At door*] There's Aby Moss, waiting for me outside. He shall blow the lad to Gibson. He may be useful to us, and I owe him one for spoiling my squeeze.

[*Exit* DALTON]

[*Enter* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Which, I've to ask pardon for intruding, not bein' used to an office, and knowing my place I 'ope. But it's gettin' on for a quarter past eleven, Mr. Robert, and twelve's the latest they will do it, and the breakfast all set out beautiful — and some parties is a gettin' impatient, which it's no more than natural, bless her, and Sam that rampagious —— But whatever's the matter? You look struck all of a heap like!

BRIERLY. Oh, nothing, nothing. It's natural, you know, a man should look queer on his wedding morning. There, go and tell May I'll be with her directly.

[*Enter* SAM]

SAM. Come along, Bob, we're all tired of waiting, especially this child. [*Sings nigger song*] Come along!

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. [*Admiringly*] Oh, that boy! If it ain't enough to make any grandmother's 'eart proud.

BRIERLY. Go — go — I'll follow you — I've some business matters to attend to.

SAM. A nice state for business you're in — I don't think — There, granny. [*Looks at him*] This is what comes of getting married! If it ain't an awful warning to a young fellow like me!

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Drat your imperence.

SAM. But the party's waiting down stairs, and we're wanted to keep 'em in spirits, so come along, granny.

[*Polks out with* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

BRIERLY. Known! Threatened! Spared by Hawkshaw — only to be denounced by this man.

[*Enter* MOSS]

MOSS. Mr. Gibson, if you please?

BRIERLY. He's in his office, sir — that way. [*Points to open door*]

Moss. I remember the young man now. A convict get himself into a respectable situation! It is a duty one owes to society to put his employer on his guard. [*Exit*]

Brierly. Yes — he's gone — I can draw my breath again — I was wrong to let him go. But to have the cup at one's lip, and see it struck away — I couldn't — I couldn't — even the detective had mercy. When we're married, I'll tell Mr. Gibson all.

[*Re-enter* Moss *and* Mr. Gibson *from his office*]

Moss. You can question him, sir, if you don't believe me: any way I've done my duty, and that's what I look to. [*Exit* Moss]

Brierly. Here's the money for the cheque, sir.

[Gibson *takes money* — Brierly *is going*]

Mr. Gibson. Robert.

Brierly. Sir!

Mr. Gibson. Where are you going?

Brierly. To dress for church, sir.

Mr. Gibson. Stay here.

Brierly. Sir!

Mr. Gibson. You have deceived me.

Brierly. Mr. Gibson —

Mr. Gibson. I know all — your crime — your conviction — your punishment!

Brierly. Mercy! mercy!

Mr. Gibson. Unhappy young man.

Brierly. Ah! unhappy you may well call me. I was sentenced, sir, but I was not guilty. It's true, sir, but I don't expect you to believe it — I've worked out my sentence, sir — they hadn't a mark against me at Portland — you may ask 'em — here's my ticket-of-leave, sir. You own I've been steady and industrious since I came here. — By heaven's help I mean to be so still — indeed I do.

Mr. Gibson. I dare say, but I must think of my own credit and character. If it was buzzed about that I kept a ticket-of-leave man in my employment —

[*Enter* Green Jones, May, Emily, Mrs. Willoughby *and* Sam]

Mrs. Willoughby. Which, axin' your pardon, Mr. Gibson, we're all ready, and the cab is a-waitin' —

Sam. And the parson getting cold.

May. Robert, why are you not dressed? What is the matter?

Brierly. Heaven help thee, my poor lass!

May. You are pale — you tremble — you are ill! Oh, speak! what is it?

Brierly. Bear up, May. But our marriage — cannot — be — yet — awhile.

All. The wedding put off!

[May *stands aghast*]

Emily. No bonnets!
Mrs. Willoughby. And no breakfasts.
Green. By Jove!
Sam. Here's a go!
[*Together*]

May. Am I dreaming? Robert, what does this mean?

Brierly. It's hard to bear. Keep up your heart — I'm discharged. He knows all.

May. [*To* Gibson] Oh, sir, you couldn't have the heart — say it was not true.

Mr. Gibson. Sorry for it. You have both deceived me — you must both leave the place.

Brierly. You hear? — Come, May.

May. I'll go, sir. It was I deceived you, not he. Only give him a chance —

[*Music — piano till end*]

Brierly. Never heed her, sir. She'd have told you long ago, but I hadn't the heart — My poor lass! Let her bide here, sir — I'll not trouble you — I'll leave the country — I'll 'list.

May. Hush, hush, Robert! We were wrong to hide the truth; we are sorely punished — but if *you've* courage to face what's before us, *I* have.

Brierly. My brave wench! Thank you for all your kindness, sir. Goodbye, friends. Come, May, we'll go together.

END OF ACT THIRD

ACT IV

Scene First. — *Bridgewater Arms — A large, gaily decorated Coffee-Room, set out with tables and benches; a bar crosses the corner of room, with gaily painted hogsheads ranged above it; beer engine, etc., at the head of bar; door to street in flat; door to parlour, curtained windows in flat; a piano; a trap leading to cellar, practicable, up stage, near*

the end of the bar; table and three chairs in front, table and benches]

[Moss, *with bags of silver, and* Dalton *seated at table. — * Maltby *waiting upon them*]

Maltby. [*At back of table*] Pint of sherry. [*Putting it down*] Very curious! — Yes, Mr. Moss, it's a pleasure to see you, sir, at the Bridgewater Arms; though it ain't the Bellevue Gardens! worse luck!

Moss. Ah! ups and downs is this lot of life, Mr. Maltby. You'll let me know when Mr. Tottie comes?

Maltby. Ah, the subcontractor for the main sewer in the next street. Such a nuisance! stops all traffic —

Moss. But sends you all the navvies. It's here they're taken on, and paid — you know.

Maltby. Connexion not aristocratic, but beery; we do four butts a-week at the bar, to say nothing of the concert room upstairs.

Dalton. What, the navvies like music to their malt, do they?

Maltby. Oh, yes, sir! I introduced the arts from the West End. The roughs adore music, especially selections from the Italian Opera, and as for sentiment and sensation, if you could hear Miss St. Evremond touch them up with the "Maniac's Tear", the new sensation ballad, by a gifted composer, attached to the establishment, and sold at the bar, price one shilling: why, we've disposed of three dozen "Maniac's Tears" on a pay night — astonishing how it goes down!

Dalton. With the beer?

[*Enter* Mrs. Green Jones, *door in flat, and comes down. — She wears a handsome evening dress under her shawl*]

Maltby [*coming forward to her*]. Here comes Mrs. Jones — gentlemen, this is the great and gifted creature I was alluding to.

Emily. Go along with your nonsense!

Maltby. Miss St. Evremond, the great sensation balladist, formerly of the Nobility's Concerts, and her Majesty's Theatre — [*Aside*] — in the ballet.

Moss. Proud to make the acquaintance of so gifted an artiste.

Emily. You're very obliging, I'm sure. [*Taking off her bonnet and shawl, and smoothing her hair. — To* Maltby] How's the room to-night?

Maltby. Tidy, but nothing to what it will be. It's the navvies' pay-night, you know.

Emily. Navvies! oh, Lord! [*Sighs*] to think of Emily St. Evremond wasting her sweetness upon an audience of navigators!

Dalton. They are not aristocratic, but they are appreciative.

Emily. Yes! poor creatures! they do know a good thing when they hear it! [*To* Maltby]

Dalton. If Miss St. Evremond will oblige us with a ballad —

Maltby. "The Maniac's Tear."

Emily. If these gentlemen wouldn't mind.

Dalton. On the contrary — we like music; don't we, Moss?

Moss. I doat upon it; especially Handel!

Emily. But where's the accompanist?

Maltby. I regret to say the signor is disgracefully screwed!

Emily. Oh, never mind, Jones can accompany me! [*Going up*] Come in, Green Jones; you're wanted!

[Maltby *opens piano*]

[*Enter* Green Jones *with basket of trotters, door in flat — they both come down*]

Green. In the trotter line, or the tuneful?

Emily. To accompany me on the piano! [*She arranges her hair*]

Green. Till you're ready, these gentlemen wouldn't like to try a trotter, would they? A penny a set, and of this morning's boiling — if I might tempt you? They're delicious with a soupçon of pepper.

Maltby. No, no, Mr. Jones, these are not *your* style of customers.

Green. Excuse me, Mr. Maltby, I'm aware trotters are not known in good society; but they go down as a relish, even with people accustomed to entrées! I liked 'em as a swell before I was reduced to them as a salesman.

Maltby. [*To* Mrs. Green Jones] Perhaps you'd give us the "Maniac's Tear"?

Emily. I can't do it without letting down my back hair!

Dalton. Oh, down with the back hair, by all means!

EMILY. You're very kind. Jones! Where's the glass?

[JONES *produces a hand-glass from basket* — EMILY *arranges her hair by glass*]

GREEN [*seating himself at the piano*]. One word of preface, gentlemen. It's a sensation ballad! scene — Criminal Ward, Bedlam! Miss St. Evremond is an interesting lunatic — with lucid intervals. She has murdered her husband — [*Finds basket in his way*] Emmy! if you'd just shift those trotters — and her three children, and is supposed to be remonstrating with one of the lunacy commissioners on the cruelty of her confinement!

[*Music* — EMILY *sings a sensation ballad, "The Maniac's Tear", accompanied by her husband — all applaud*]

MALTBY [*going off*]. Now — look sharp, Miss St. Evremond. The Wisconsin Warblers are at their last chorus.

[*Exit* MALTBY]

EMILY. [*To her husband*] Bye-bye, dear, till after the concert — you know I can't be seen speaking to you while you carry that basket.

GREEN. True — in the humble trotter-man who would suspect the husband of the brilliant St. Evremond! There's something romantic in it — I hover round the room — I hear you universally admired — visibly applauded — audibly adored. Oh, agony!

EMILY. Now, Jones — you are going to be jealous again! I do believe jealousy's at the bottom of those trotters!

[*Exit* MRS. *and* MR. GREEN JONES]

MOSS. Now's our time — while the fools upstairs are having their ears tickled. You've the tools ready for jumping that crib in St. Nicholas Lane?

DALTON. Yes, but tools ain't enough — I must have a clear stage, and a pal who knows the premises.

MOSS. I've managed that — nobody sleeps in the place but the old housekeeper and her precious grandson.

DALTON. He's as sharp as a terrier dog — and can bite too — a young varmint. If I come across him!

[*Threateningly*]

MOSS. No occasion for that — you're so violent. I've made the young man's acquaintance. I've asked him to meet me here to-night for a quiet little game — his revenge, I called it. I'll dose the lad till he's past leaving the place. You drop a hint to the old lady — she'll come to take care of him. The coast will be clear yonder.

DALTON. And the five thousand shiners will be nailed in the turning of a jemmy. If we had that young Brierly in the job — he knows the way about the place blindfold. But he's on the square, he is — bent on earning an honest livelihood.

MOSS. But I've blown him wherever he's got work. He *must* dance to our tune at last.

DALTON. Ah! if *you've* got him in hand! Work *him* into the job, and I'll jump the crib to-night.

MOSS. He's applied to be taken on at the contract works near here. This is the pay night — Tottie, the subcontractor, is a friend of mine —

DALTON. He's lucky!

MOSS. Yes. I find him the cash at twenty per cent., till his certificates are allowed by the engineer. 'Taint heavy interest, but there's no risk — a word from me, and he'd discharge every navvie in his gang. But I've only to breathe jail-bird, and there's no need of a discharge. The men themselves would work the lad off the job. They are sad roughs, but they've a horror of jail-birds.

DALTON. Ah! nobody likes the Portland mark. I know that — I've tried the honest dodge, too.

MOSS. It don't answer.

DALTON. It didn't with me. I had a friend, like you, always after me. Whatever I tried, I was blown as a convict, and hunted out from honest men.

MOSS. And then you met me — and I was good to you — wasn't I?

DALTON. Yes. You were very kind.

MOSS. Always allowed you handsome for the swag you brought, and put you up to no end of good things! and I'll stick by you, my dear — I never drop a friend.

DALTON. No, till the hangman takes your place at his side.

[*Presses his elbows to his side in the attitude of a man pinioned*]

MOSS. Don't be disagreeable, my dear — you give me a cold shiver. Hush! here come the navvies.

[*Enter the* NAVIGATORS *noisily, through door. They seat themselves at their*

tables, calling, some for pots of beer, some for quarterns of gin. The Potman *and* Waiters *bustle about with* Maltby *superintending and taking money.* Brierly *follows. Enter* Hawkshaw, *disguised as a navvy. He appears flustered with drink — goes to one of the tables, and, assuming a country dialect, calls swaggeringly*]

Hawkshaw. Gallon o' beer! measter.

Maltby. A gallon?

Hawkshaw. Aye, and another when that's done — I'm in brass to-night, and I stand treat. Here, mates, who'll drink? [Navvies *crowd, with loud acclamations to his table — beer is brought —* Hawkshaw *to* Brierly, *who is seated left of table*] Come, won't thou drink, my little flannel back?

Brierly. No, thank you; I've a poor head for liquor, and I've not had my supper yet.

Hawkshaw. Thou'st sure it's not pride?

Brierly. Pride? I've no call for pride — I've come to try and get taken on at the works.

Hawkshaw. Well, thou looks a tough 'un. There's cast-iron Jack was smashed in the tunnel this morning. There'll be room for thee, if thou canst swing the old anchor.

Brierly. The old anchor?

Hawkshaw. Ha, ha! It's easy to see thou's no banker. Why, the pick, to be sure — the groundsman's breadwinner. Halloa, mates, keep a drop of grog for Ginger. [*Goes back to table*]

Navvies. Aye, aye!

Hawkshaw. Here's the old anchor, boys, and long may we live to swing it.

All. The pick forever. Hip, hip hurrah!

Maltby [*coming down*]. Mr. Tottie's in the parlor, and wishes particularly to see you, Mr. Moss.

Moss. I should think he did — say I'm coming. [*Exit* Maltby]

Dalton. [*Aside to* Moss] You look after the Lancashire lad — yonder he sits — and I'll drop a hint to the old woman. Stay, we'd better work from the old church-yard of St. Nicholas — there's a door opens into it from the crib. I'll hide the tools behind one of the tombstones.

Moss. Beautiful! Sacred to the memory of Jem Dalton's jack-in-the-box! Ha, ha, ha!

[*Exit* Moss *into parlor,* Dalton *by the street door*]

Hawkshaw. Here, landlord, take your change out of that. [*Flings a sovereign on table*] Call for more beer, mates, till I come back.

[*Exit, staggering like a drunken man, after* Dalton]

1st Navvy. Thou'llt come back, mate?

Hawkshaw. Aye, aye, boys, directly. [*At door*] Contractor's in t' parlor wi' the week's pay.

1st Navvy. Here's thy health!

All. [*Sing*] "For he's a jolly good fellow," etc.

[*Enter* Green Jones]

Green. Emily is bringing down the house in the "Maniac." I can't stand it; my feelings as a husband are trampled on. But she's a trump, too — and what a talent! By heaven, if ever I get my head above water again, I won't fool away my money as I've done; no, I'll take a theatre at the West End, and bring out my wife in everything. It will be an immense success; meanwhile, till the pounds present themselves, let me look after the pence. Trotters, gents, trotters — penny the set, and this morning's boiling. [*He goes up among tables*]

1st Navvy. Stop till we get brass, we'll clear out thy basket.

[*Exit* Navvies, *followed by* Green Jones]

Brierly. Yes, the old anchor is my last chance — I've tried every road to an honest livelihood, and, one after another, they are barred in my face. Everywhere that dreadful word, "jail-bird," seems to be breathed in the air about me — sometimes in a letter, sometimes in a hint, sometimes a copy of the newspaper with my trial, and then it's the same story — sorry to part with me — no complaint to make — but can't keep a ticket-of-leave man. Who can it be that hunts me down this way? Hawkshaw spared me. I've done no man a wrong — poor fellows like me should have no enemies. I wouldn't care for myself, but my poor lass, my brave, true-hearted May; I'm dragging her down along with me. Ah! here she is.

[*Enter* May, *poorly dressed — she has a can, and some food in a bundle*]

May. [*Cheerfully*] Well, Robert, dear, I said I shouldn't be long; I've brought your supper.

Brierly. Thank thee, darling — I'm not hungry — thou'st been out after work all the day — eat thyself — thou need'st strength most.

May. Nay, dear, what will become of me if you lose heart? But if you'll be a good boy, and take your tea [*Opens tin and takes bread from bundle*], I'll tell you a piece of good news — for you — for both of us.

Brierly. That will be something new.

May. I've got a promise of work from the Sailor's Ready-Made Clothing Warehouse near here. It won't be much, but it will keep the wolf from the door till you get another situation. Have you tried if the contractor here will take you?

Brierly. Not yet. He's in yonder paying the men. He'll send for me; but I scarcely dare to ask him. Oh, May, lass, I've held on hard to hope, but it feels as if it was slipping out of my hand at last!

May. Robert, dear Robert, grasp it hard; so long as we do what is right, all will come clear at last; we're in kind hands, dear — you know we are.

Brierly. I begin to doubt it, lass — I do, indeed.

May. No, no; never doubt that, or my heart will give way too —

Brierly. And thou that has had courage for both of us. Every blow that has fallen, every door that has been shut between me and an honest livelihood, every time that clean hands have been drawn away from mine, and respectable faces turned aside as I came near them, I've come to thee for comfort, and love, and hope, and I've found them till now.

May. Oh, yes! what's the good of a sunshine wife? It's hard weather tries us women best, dear; you men ain't half so stout-hearted.

Brierly. I'd not mind the misery so much for myself; 'tis for thee.

May. I don't complain — do I?

Brierly. Never! But, nevertheless, I've brought thee to sorrow, and want, and shame. Till I came back to thee thou hadst friends, work and comforts. But since Mr. Gibson discharged us off, the blight that has followed me has reached thee too, the bravest, honestest, brightest lass that ever doubled a man's joys, and halved his burdens. Oh! it's too bad — [*Rises*] — it kills the heart out of me — it makes me mad! [*Crosses*]

May [*following him*]. I tell you, 'twill all come clear at last, if we are only true to ourselves — to each other. I've work promised, and perhaps you may be taken on here. I spy bright days before us still.

Brierly. Bright days! I can't see them through the prison cloud that stands like a dark wall between me and honest labour. May, lass, I sometimes think I had better let it all go — run — 'list — make a hole in the water, anything that would rid thee of me; thou could'st make thy way alone.

May. Oh, Robert, that is cruel! nothing others could do to us could hurt me like those words from you; we are man and wife, and we'll take life as man and wife should, hand-in-hand: where you go, I will go; where you suffer, I will be there to comfort; and when better times come, — as come they will — we will thank God for them together.

Brierly. I'll try to hope.

May. And you won't heed the black thoughts that come over you when you're alone?

Brierly. I'll do my best to fight 'em off.

May. That's a brave dear. I'm only going to the warehouse; I shall be back soon. Good-bye, dearest. Remember, when the clouds are thickest, the sun still shines behind them. [*Exit*]

Brierly. Bless that brave, bright heart; she puts strength into me, in spite of the devilish doubts that have got their claws about my throat. Yes, I *will* try once more.

[*The* Navigators *come noisily out of parlour, and re-seat themselves at the tables*]

[*Enter* Moss, *from parlour*]

Moss [*speaking off*]. So, all paid at last?

[*Re-enter* Dalton, *and* Hawkshaw, *after him*]

Dalton. [*To* Moss] All right, the lad's coming. I've tipped the old woman the office, and planted the tools. [*He looks at table*]

Hawkshaw [*tapping* Brierly *on the shoulder, who starts suddenly*]. All

the gang ha' gotten their brass — Tottie's takin' on men now, my little flannel-back. Thou go in, and put on a bold face — Tottie likes chaps as speaks up to him.

[HAWKSHAW *returns to his* MATES]

BRIERLY. If this chance fail — God help us both.

[*Exit into parlour.* NAVVIES *at the table clamour and fight, and shout over their drink.* MOSS *glances at* BRIERLY *as he passes*]

MOSS. There he goes!

[NAVVIES *clamour*]

DALTON. It would be a pity to let a ticket-of-leave man in among all those nice, sober, well-behaved young men. [*Clamour*]

MOSS. I must blow him again; he ought to be near the end of his tether, now. [*Enter* SAM WILLOUGHBY] Here comes our young friend. [*Coaxingly to* SAM WILLOUGHBY] Ah, my dear — so you've come out for a little hanky-panky with old Moss. Sit down. My friend, Mr. Walker. What'll you have?

SAM. I don't care — I'm game for anything from sherry to rum-shrub. Suppose we begin with a brandy and soda, to cool the coppers!

DALTON. [*Calls*] Brandy and soda, Maltby.

SAM. I had an awful go in of it last night at the balls, and dropped into a lot of 'em like a three-year-old.

[*Imitates action of billiard-play, with his walking-cane for a cue*]

MOSS. Billiards, too! Lord! what a clever young chap you are!

[MALTBY *brings soda-water and brandy*]

SAM [*sits at back of table*]. Yes, I know a thing or two. [*Takes glass*] I wasn't born blind, like a terrier pup — I rayther think. — But you promised me my revenge, you old screw. [*Drinks*] That's the tipple to steady a chap's hand. Now, fork out the pictures, old boy.

MOSS [*shuffling cards*]. Oh, what a boy you are! What shall it be this time?

SAM. A round or two of brag to begin with, and a few deals at Blind Hookums for a wind-up.

[*As he deals, enter* BRIERLY *from inner room*]

BRIERLY. Heaven be thanked, another chance yet!

HAWKSHAW. [*As* BRIERLY *passes*] Well, my little flannel-back, has he taken you on?

BRIERLY. Yes, I'm to come to work to-morrow morning. I'm in Ginger's gang.

HAWKSHAW. I'm Ginger. Come, let's wet thy footing.

BRIERLY. My last shilling. [*Throws it down*] It's all I have, but you're welcome.

HAWKSHAW. Nay, it sha'n't be said Ginger Bill ever cleared a chap out neither. I'll pay for thy footing, and thou'lt stand beer thy first pay night. Here, measter, a gallon to wet t' new chap's name. Bob, we'll christen thee, 'cause thou hadst but a shillin'. — Ha, ha, ha!

NAVVIES [*laugh — They all drink*]. Here's Bob's health.

BRIERLY [*recognising* SAM]. Sam Willoughby, in this place, and over the devil's books, too. Oh! I'm sorry to see this — sorry — sorry. — Poor old woman! If she knew!

SAM. [*Calling*] Best card! [*Showing a card*] First stake!

DALTON. Stop a minute — ace of diamonds!

SAM. First stake to you. Hang it! never mind, [*Deal*] one can't lose much at this game — I go a tizzy.

[*Puts a stake on cards*]

MOSS. A shilling.

SAM. Five.

DALTON. I stand.

MOSS. Ten.

SAM. A sovereign! thirty-one! Third stake, and the brag. [*Shows his cards*] Pair royal — pair — ace of spades. Fork over the shiners.

MOSS. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I'm ruined — ruined. [*Pays sovereign*]

DALTON. [*Calls*] Two colds without.

SAM. Now, for my deal.

[*He deals three cards to each —* MALTBY *brings brandy*]

MOSS. Best card! First stake. I stand.

SAM. I brag. Hang peddling with tizzies — half a crown.

DALTON. Five.

[MOSS *looks at* SAM'S *hand, and signals to* DALTON]

SAM. Ten.

DALTON. A sovereign.

MOSS. Oh! dear, what a boy it is! How much have you got in your pocket?

SAM. Lots! I'm paid quarterly now. Had my quarter to-day! — Another cold without. [*Calls*] Let's see — I'll hold on. [*Draws card*] Thirty-four — overdrawn — confound it! Now let's see your hand.

[*To* DALTON]

DALTON. Three pairs — fives, trays, deuces, and the knave of clubs.

SAM. Hang it all! How is a man to stand against such cards?

BRIERLY. How is a man to stand against such play? He was looking over your cards, and see — [*Seizes a card from* MOSS's *lap*] — the ace of diamonds! Handy to make pairs royal! Sam, if you won't believe me, believe your own eyes: you're being cheated, robbed. You old villain — you should be ashamed of yourself!

MOSS. Oh, dear! oh, dear! to say such things to a man at my time of life!

DALTON. We're not to be bullied.

SAM [*threateningly*]. You give me back my money.

[MALTBY *comes down*]

MOSS. I sha'n't! Here, Mr. Maltby.

MALTBY. Come, be off. I can't have any disturbance here. Mr. Moss is a most respectable man, and his friends are as respectable as he is, and as for you — if you won't leave the room quietly, you must be made to.

SAM. Who'll make me? Come on, [*Squaring*] both of you! Stand up to 'em, Bob, I'm not afraid!

[NAVIGATORS *gather round*]

[*Enter* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. It's his voice — which well I know it. Oh! Sam — Sam, I've found you at last!

SAM. Well, suppose you have — what then?

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. What then! Oh! dear — oh! dear. And I've run myself into that state of trimmle and perspiration, and if it hadn't been for the gentleman I might have been east, and west, and high, and low, but it's at the "Bridgewater Arms" you'll find him, he says — and here I *have* found you, sure enough — and you come home with me this minute.

MOSS. Ah! you'd better go home with the old lady!

DALTON. And if you take my advice, you'll send him to bed without his supper.

SAM. [MRS. WILLOUGHBY *pushing him away*] I ain't a-going. Now, you give me my money — I'm not going to stand any nonsense.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. And this is what he calls attending elocution class of a night, and improvin' of his mind — and me a-toilin' and a-moilin' for him — which I'm his own grandmother, gentlemen, and him the only one of three. [*Still holding him*]

SAM. It's no use, granny, I'm not a child to be tied to your apron strings — you've no right to be naggin' and aggravatin', and coming after a chap, to make him look small this way. I don't mind — I sha'n't stir. There!

[*He flings his cap on the table, and sits on it, swinging his legs*]

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Oh! dear — oh! dear — he'll break my heart, he will.

BRIERLY. Sam, my lad, listen to me, if you won't hearken to her. — A bad beginning makes a bad end, and you're beginning badly: the road you're on leads downwards, and once in the slough at the bottom o't — oh! trust one who knows it — there's no working clear again. You may hold out your hand — you may cry for help — you may struggle hard — but the quicksands are under your foot — and you sink down, down, till they close over your head.

HAWKSHAW. [*Seated*] Hear the little flannel-back. He talks like a missionary, he do. [*All laugh*]

BRIERLY. Go home, my lad — go home with her — be a son to her — love her as she has loved thee — make her old days happy — be sober, be steady, and when you're a grown man, and her chair's empty at t'chimney corner, you'll mayhap remember this day, and be thankful you took the advice of poor, hunted-down, broken-hearted Bob Brierly.

SAM [*who has betrayed signs of feeling while* BRIERLY *has been speaking*]. I don't know — I feel so queer — and — don't look at me. [*To* MRS. WILLOUGHBY — *gets off table and crosses to her*] I've been a regular bad 'un, granny — I'm very sorry — I'll put on the curb — I'll pull up — that is, I'll try.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY [*rises*]. Oh! bless him for those words! Bless you! my own dear boy. [*Crosses to* BRIERLY] And you, too, Mr. Brierly — which if the widow's blessing is worth while,

it's yours, and many of them. Oh! dear — oh! dear.

[*Cries — Gets out her handkerchief, and in doing so drops her purse and keys —* MOSS *picks up the purse —* MRS. WILLOUGHBY *catches his eye as he does so —* DALTON, *unobserved by all, picks up the keys*]

BRIERLY. Nay, don't thank me. It's late now. Go home — Sam, give her your arm.

MOSS. Here's your purse, old lady. [*Making a final attempt on* SAM] What, you won't stay and make a night of it?

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. I'll trouble you not to speak to my grandson. If ever an old man was ashamed of his grey hairs, it's *you* ought to be. Come, Sam.

MOSS. [*Aside*] Baulked.

DALTON. No — I didn't give her back her keys.

SAM [*turning to* MOSS]. If I wasn't a-going to turn over a new leaf — Oh, wouldn't I like to pitch into you!

[*Exit* SAM *and* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

HAWKSHAW [*pretending to be very drunk*]. And so should I — an old varmint — and so would all of us; — you're bad enough for a tommy shopkeeper.

NAVVIES. Aye, that he is — ought to be ashamed of himself.

MOSS. And who accuses me? A nice chap, this, to take away honest folk's characters!

HAWKSHAW. Stow that! He's one of *us* now — a regular blue-stocking. Tottie's taken him on! He's paid his footing — eh, mates?

ALL. Aye — aye.

HAWKSHAW. Here's Bob's health, mates.

ALL. Aye — aye.

MOSS. Stop; before you drink that health, best know the man you're drinking to. You're a rough lot, I know; but you're honest men.

BRIERLY. Oh, man, if you've a heart — [*Rises*]

MOSS. I owe you one — I always pay my debts — [*To* NAVVIES] You're not felons, nor company for felons — for jail-birds.

ALL. Jail-birds!

MOSS. Aye — jail-birds. Ask him how long it is since he served his four years at Portland. [HAWKSHAW *goes up, crosses, and sits quietly at head of table*] Look! — he turns pale — his lip falls; he can't deny it!

[BRIERLY *turns away*]

HAWKSHAW. Who knows, lads — perhaps he's repented.

ALL. No — no. [*Grumbling*] No jail-bird — no convict — no ticket-of-leaver.

[*They turn away from* BRIERLY]

BRIERLY. Aye, mates — it's true I was convicted, but I wasn't guilty. I served my time. I came out an altered man. I tried hard to earn an honest livelihood —— [*They all turn away*] Don't all turn away from me! Give me a chance — only a chance.

ALL. No — no.

BRIERLY. Nay, then, my last hope is gone — I can fight no longer!

[*Throws his head on his hands in despair*]

[*The* NAVIGATORS *retire;* HAWKSHAW, *pretending to be very drunk, appears to sleep with head on table. The* NAVIGATORS *drop off, and exit one by one*]

MOSS. [*To* DALTON] Honesty's bowled out at last! It's our game now. [*Puts his hand on* BRIERLY'S *shoulder*] I say, my friend —

BRIERLY. Eh! [*Looking up*] You! The man who told them! [*Fiercely*]

MOSS. Yes — yes; but don't put yourself in a passion.

BRIERLY. Only tell me — Is it you who have followed me in this way? — who have turned all against me? — who have kept me from earning honest bread?

MOSS. Yes.

BRIERLY. But why, man, why? I had done you no wrong.

MOSS. Ask him. [*Pointing to* DALTON] He's an old friend of yours.

BRIERLY. I don't know him — yet — I've seen that face before. Yes, it is — Jem Downey! Thou villain! [*He seizes him*] I know thee now. Thou shalt answer to me for all this misery.

DALTON. Easy does it, Bob. Hands off, and let's take things pleasantly.

BRIERLY. Not content with leading me into play, and drink, and deviltry, — with making me your tool, — with sending me to a prison, it's you that have dogged me — have denounced me as a convict.

DALTON. Of course — you didn't think any but an old friend would have taken such an interest in you.

BRIERLY. Did you want to close all roads against me but that which leads to the dock?

DALTON. Exactly.

[BRIERLY *turns to* MOSS]

MOSS. Exactly.

DALTON. You see, when a man's in the mud himself, and can't get out of it, he don't like to see another fight clear. Come, honest men won't have anything to do with you — best try the black sheep — we ain't proud. [*All sit*] We've a job in hand will be the making of all three. [*Fills his glass*] Here, drink, and put some heart into you. [BRIERLY *drinks*] That's your sort — a lad of spirit — I said there was real grit in him — didn't I, Mossey?

MOSS. You always gave him the best of characters.

DALTON. Is it a bargain?

BRIERLY. Yes.

DALTON. There! Tip us the cracksman's crook — so!

[*Shakes hands with a peculiar grip*]

[*Enter* MAY EDWARDS]

MAY. Robert — not here? [*Sees him*] Ah, there he is. [*Going — pauses*] Who are those with him?

DALTON. Now a caulker to clinch the bargain. [*They drink*]

MAY. [*In pain*] Ah! Robert!

BRIERLY. You here — lass?

MOSS. Oh, these petticoats!

DALTON. You're not wanted here, young woman.

MAY. He is my husband, sir. He is not strong — the drink will do him harm.

DALTON. Ha, ha, ha! Brandy do a man harm! It's mother's milk — take another sip. [*Fills* BRIERLY'S *glass again*] To your girl's good health?

MAY. Robert, dear — come with me.

BRIERLY. Have you got work?

MAY. No — not yet.

BRIERLY. No more have I, lass. The man took me on — it was the old story.

MAY. Oh, Robert — come!

BRIERLY. I shall stay with friends here — thou go home, and don't sit up for me.

MAY [*imploringly*]. Robert!

BRIERLY. I've my reasons.

DALTON. Come, are you going?

BRIERLY. [MAY *clings to him*] Stand off, lass. You used to do what I bid you — stand off, I say.[1]

[*He shakes himself free from her*]

MAY. Oh, Robert, Robert!

[*Staggers back to table and sits*]

BRIERLY. [*Aside*] I must — or they'll not trust me.

MAY. These men! to what have they tempted him in his despair? They sha'n't drive me away. [*Aside*] I'll watch.

[*Exit, after a mute appeal to* BRIERLY. *The tables before this have been cleared of all the* NAVVIES *except* HAWKSHAW, *who lies with his head on the table as if dead drunk* — MOSS *rises*]

MALTBY [*re-entering from bar, shaking* HAWKSHAW *by the shoulder*]. Now, my man, we're shutting up the bar.

HAWKSHAW. Shut up. I'm shut up. Good night. [*Lets his head fall*]

DALTON [*coming down*]. It's no use — he won't go, and I'm wanted in the concert room. [*Exit* MALTBY, *calling*] Bar closed!

MOSS. [*To* DALTON, *suspiciously pointing to* HAWKSHAW] There's a party —

DALTON [*rising*]. Eh? [*Shaking* HAWKSHAW] Holloa, wake up!

[HAWKSHAW *grunts*]

MOSS. He's in a deplorable state of intoxication.

DALTON. Yes, he's got his cargo — no danger in him — now for business. First and foremost, no more of this.

[1] Passages added since the first representation:

—— Stand off, I say!

MAY. Oh! Robert, Robert! This is the first time you ever thrust me from you. He is a good, kind husband, gentlemen; but we have had sore trouble lately, and it has almost driven him wild sometimes. But, oh, if you have wives of your own at home, think of them and spare me. Don't drive him to drink. He's never taken to that in all our troubles. Robert, come home with me — our hearth may be cold, but Love has always sat beside it — our cupboard may be bare, but we have never yet wanted bread, and, with heaven's help, we never will. Robert, come — come with the wife that loves you — come, come!

—— and don't sit up for me.

MAY. Robert!

—— not wanted here at all.

MAY. Oh! Robert, Robert!

[*Pockets the bottle.* —*To* Brierly] You've heard the job we have in hand?

Brierly. Yes, but you have not told me where it is, or why you want my help.

Dalton. It's old Gibson's office. The five thousand you know — you know where it's kept.

Brierly. Well.

Dalton. And you'll take us to it?

Brierly. Yes.

Dalton. That's the ticket. Then we may as well start.

Brierly. Now?

Dalton. Now. My rule is, never put off till to-morrow the crib I can crack to-day. Besides, you might change your mind.

Moss. One has heard of such things.

Brierly. But —

Dalton. You crane —

Brierly. No.

Dalton. I'll get a cab. [*Going*]

Moss. And I'll get another — we'd best go single. [*Following him*]

Dalton. No, it wouldn't be polite to leave Mr. Brierly. [*Aside*] I don't half trust him — don't let him out of your sight. [*Exit*]

Brierly. [*Aside*] If he'll only leave me for a moment.

Moss [*sitting*]. He's carried off the bottle, and the bar's shut up, or we might have a little refreshment.

Brierly. Perhaps, if you went to the landlord —

Moss. No, I'd rather stay with you — I like your company, uncommon.

[*Enter* Maltby, *with a wine-basket and a candle*]

Maltby. Here's Mr. Tottie standing champagne round to the Wisconsin Warblers, and the bar stock all out, and the waiters in bed! I must go down to the cellar myself — very humiliating! [*Goes to trap near bar*] What with the light, and what with the liquor — I say, Mr. Moss, if you would lend me a hand?

Brierly. [*Aside*] I might give *him* the information. [*To* Maltby] Let me help you, sir. [*Goes to trap*]

Moss. Then I'll go too.

[Maltby *opens trap*]

Brierly. The stairs are steep — two's quite enough.

Moss. But I'm so fond of your company.

Maltby. If you'll hold the light.

[Brierly *takes it and* Maltby *goes down*]

Brierly. [*Aside*] A word'll do it.

[*Going down* — Moss *takes candle from him and gets between him and* Maltby]

Moss. Allow me. The light will do best in the middle. [Moss *descends*]

Maltby. [*From below*] Now, then!

Brierly [*rapidly closes the trap, and stands upon it*]. Now's the time. [*Seizes the pen that stands on the bar, and writes, reading as he writes, quickly*] "To Mr. Gibson, Peckham. The office will be entered to-night; I'm in it to save the property and secure the robbers. — R. Brierly." But who'll take it?

Hawkshaw [*who has got up and read the letter over his shoulder*]. I will.

Brierly. You?

Hawkshaw [*pulls off his rough cap, wig, and whiskers, and speaks in his own voice*]. Hawkshaw, the detective! [*Gives a pistol*] Take this — I'll be on the look-out.

[Hawkshaw *lets his head fall again as* Dalton *re-appears, beckoning at the door, and* Moss *re-appears from the trap*]

Scene Second. — *A Street in the City — Moonlight.*

[*Enter* Mrs. Willoughby *and* Sam. *She is searching her pocket* [1]]

[1] Second Scene. — Begin

[*Enter* May Edwards, *breathless and pale, her head uncovered, — her hair dishevelled*]

May. Thrust from *his* side — No, no — not *his;* but the fierce, hard man's, that drink and despair have changed him to! He told me to go home. *Home!* (*Shuddering*) As if there was any home for me, but where he is, in his sorrow! I tried to watch — but the pain in my heart blinded me, and I've wandered — wandered through the black night in these stony streets! Oh — if I had only died before this! If I could die now! Ha! the river can't be far off! — there is rest there. (*Shrieks*) No, no, no — What devilish tempting is this? Die and leave him alone with his despair. Heaven help him and forgive me! No; I will live — to bring him back to love and hope and faith. If I must die, it shall be with my hand in his — our hearts against each other! If I could but find him! Oh, Robert! Husband! Love! Where are you? Come to me — come to me! [*She staggers off, distractedly*]

[*Omit her appearance in the subsequent part of the scene*]

Then enter Mrs. Willoughby *and* Sam.

SAM. You're sure you had 'em at the public.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Certain sure, my dear, leastwise, I let myself out with the big street door, so I couldn't have left that in the kitchen window, and I'd the little ones all in my pocket, which I noticed a hole in it only yesterday — and it's best Holland, at one and six, and only worn three years, and they ain't dropped into my skirt, nor they ain't a-hanging to my crinoline.

SAM. Oh, bother, granny; we can't have a regular Custom House search in the street; let's go back to the public — perhaps they've found them.

[*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. GREEN JONES, *she with shawl and bonnet — he with his basket and the guitar*]

GREEN. There's only one set left; perhaps Providence has sent a customer. Trotters, mum? [*To* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

EMILY [*stopping him*]. In my company! I'm surprised at you! conceal that basket! [*Advancing to* MRS. WILLOUGHBY] Why, if it isn't Mrs. Willoughby and Sam! Why, don't you know us — the St. Evremonds?

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Lor bless me — and so it is! and that dear, blessed man that suffered so in his shins — which perseverance is its own reward; and may I ask what Mr. Jones —

EMILY. Mr. St. Evremond.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Mr. St. Evremond — what's he adoin'?

EMILY. He's in business.

GREEN. Yes, as a — [*Producing basket*]

EMILY [*getting between* MRS. WILLOUGHBY *and the basket*]. As a sort of sheep farmer. But whatever are you doing here at this time of night?

MRS. WILLOUGHBY. Oh, my dear, it's a long story — and if you wears pockets, mend 'em, is my advice — which, whether they dropped, or whether they was picked —

SAM. [*Impatiently*] We can't get in — granny's lost her keys.

EMILY. And *you* haven't a latch? Well, I wouldn't have thought it of you. Where did she lose them?

SAM. At the Bridgewater Arms — and the house is shut up now.

EMILY. I'm engaged there; I don't mind knocking Maltby up — I rather like it. Come along, Jones, it's only a step; [*Aside to him*] conceal that basket!

[*Exeunt* EMILY, SAM, *and* MRS. WILLOUGHBY]

GREEN. Emily thinks trotters low; she don't see that even the trotter trade may be elevated by politeness and attention to seasoning. [*Exit*]

[*Enter* DALTON, MOSS, *and* BRIERLY]

DALTON. Come along, Bob. All serene. [*Aside*] Where could he have got that six-shooter from? However, I nailed the caps in the cab. Moss, you be crow — two whistles if the coast ain't clear — *we'll* work the crib. Lucky I nailed the old woman's keys. They'll save tools and time. Give me the glim. [MOSS *takes out small lanthorn and gives it to him*] Now, my lad, [*To* BRIERLY] take care; I'm a man of few words. — The pal who sticks by me, I stick by him, till death. But the man who tries to double on me, had better have the hangman looking after him, than Jem Dalton.

[*Exeunt* DALTON, BRIERLY, *and* MOSS]

[*Enter* HAWKSHAW]

HAWKSHAW. This should be Crampton's beat. [*Gives a peculiar whistle, and enter a* DETECTIVE] Take the fastest Hansom you can find; tear down with this to Peckham. [*Gives note*] Bring the old gent back to St. Nicholas Lane. Say he'll be wanted to make a charge. There's a crib to be jumped. I'm down on 'em. By the bye, lend me your barker. [DETECTIVE *gives him a pistol, and exit*] Jem Dalton's a tough customer. I always feel rather ashamed to burn powder. Any fool can blow a man's brains out. [*Tries caps and charges*] That lad's true blue after all. I had no idea that he tumbled to their game. He managed that letter uncommonly neat. Now for St. Nicholas Churchyard. When Jem Dalton planted his tools he never thought they'd come up darbies. [*Exit*]

[*Enter* MAY, *breathless*]

MAY. I've followed the cab as far as I could. I saw them get out, and lost them at the last turning. If I could only keep them in sight — if he could but hear my voice — Robert! Robert! [*Exit*]

SCENE THIRD. — *The Churchyard of St. Nicholas with tombstones and neglected trees; wall at back; up, side of stage, an iron railing supposed to separate the churchyard from the street; the wall of* MR. GIBSON'S *office, with practicable back door*]

[DALTON *and* BRIERLY *drop over the wall, followed by* MOSS]

DALTON. Now to transplant the tools! [*Gets tools from behind tombstone*] All right. Moss, look alive! Here's the door and the keys.

[*Exit into office by back door, followed by* BRIERLY]

MOSS. [*On the look-out*] Nice, quiet place — I like working in the city; I wish everybody lived out of town, and left their premises in charge of their housekeepers. [MAY *is heard, singing the refrain of her song*] What's that? That girl! She must have followed us. Here she is.

[*Enter* MAY *in the street*]

MAY [*sees* MOSS]. Oh, sir, you were with him! where is he?

MOSS. I'm just taking a little walk in my garden before retiring for the night; they've gone on to the Cave of Harmony — first turn on the left; there's a red lamp over the door; you can't miss it.

MAY. Oh, thank you — thank you!

MOSS. That's neat! Trust old Moss when anybody's to be made safe.

[HAWKSHAW *during the above has dropped over wall at the back, seizes* MOSS *from behind, stops his mouth with one hand, and handcuffs him*]

HAWKSHAW. Stir or speak, and you're a dead man!

DALTON [*appearing at back door*]. Hang the cloud! I can't see. Moss!

HAWKSHAW [*Imitating*]. All serene!

DALTON [*coming down*]. We've done the job. [*Calling to* BRIERLY] Now, the box.

BRIERLY. [*Within*] I'll bring it.

[*Comes from door with cash-box*]

DALTON. We'll share at the Pigeons in Duck Lane. The box! quick!

BRIERLY. A word or two first.

DALTON. We can talk in the cab.

BRIERLY. No, here. You were my ruin four years ago.

DALTON. I've paid you back to-night twice over. Come, the box.

BRIERLY. I suffered then for your crime. Ever since, you've come between me and honest life — you've broke me down — you've brought me to this.

DALTON. I suppose you mean you've a right to an extra share of the swag?

BRIERLY. No, I mean that you're my prisoner, or you're a dead man.

[*Seizes him and presents pistol*]

DALTON. Hands off, you fool!

BRIERLY. Nay then —

[*Snaps pistol*]

DALTON. You should have asked me for the caps. Here they are.

[*Holds them up*]

BRIERLY. No matter; armed or unarmed, you don't escape me.

[*A struggle* — DALTON *strikes down* BRIERLY *as* HAWKSHAW *rushes from his concealment*]

HAWKSHAW. Now, Jem Dalton! It's my turn!

DALTON. Hawkshaw!

[*They struggle;* HAWKSHAW *is forced down on a tombstone and nearly strangled;* SAM *appears outside the rails, springs over them, seizes* DALTON *by the legs and throws him over;* HAWKSHAW *rises and puts the handcuffs on* DALTON; MAY *appears in the street*]

MAY. Robert! Husband!

SAM. [*Over* DALTON] Lie still, will you? You're a nice young man! [*Crossing, looking over* MOSS] You're a pair of nice young men!

HAWKSHAW. Now, Jem Dalton! remember poor Joe Skirrett — I promised him I'd do it. I've done it at last.

[*Enter* MR. GIBSON *from back door of house, followed by* MAY, *who has gone round*]

GIBSON. This way. Here they are! The safe open! The cash-box gone!

HAWKSHAW. No, saved.

[*Gives it to him*]

GIBSON. By whom?

HAWKSHAW. The man who is bleeding yonder, Robert Brierly.

MAY. My husband — wounded! Oh, mercy! [*She kneels over him*]

GIBSON. Thank heaven, he's not dead. I can repay him yet.

HAWKSHAW. Men don't die so easily. He's worth a dozen dead men.

MAY. Look — he opens his eyes. Robert, speak to me — it's May — — your own wife.

BRIERLY. [*Faintly*] Darling, I'm glad you're here. It's only a clip of the head. I'm none the worse. It was all my game to snare those villains. Who's there? Mr. Gibson? You wouldn't trust me, sir, but I was not ungrateful. You see, there may be some good left in a "TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN" after all. [*Tableau*]

THE END

CASTE

(1867)

By T. W. Robertson

THOMAS WILLIAM ROBERTSON

(1829–1871)

WE speak of the era of Tom Robertson as though some fateful thing had happened to the British drama with his advent. The stage pendulum had swung so far toward an imitation of heroic speech and attitude, the sentiment of stage poetry had gone so far away from the sentiment of real life, that it seemed as though the English went to the theatre to stifle reality beneath an imagination which was almost puerile and an invention which was thoroughly artificial. Such drama was, as we have said before, encouraged through the domination of the actor and his method. Speak as we may of the innovations of Tom Robertson — these innovations would have had, at the very outset, small encouragement, had it not been for the close coöperation of Squire and Marie Bancroft, both of whom were so closely identified with the cream of Robertson's comedy writing.

"Caste", the logical selection for inclusion in the present volume, may not now strike us with any of its former originality. It may be stilted, and yet it still has vitality. It is curious to note, in dramatic history, how a drama may lose its contemporaneousness, and yet remain an effective piece for the theatre. Only recently (1918), Miss Ethel Barrymore produced a garbled version of "Camille." Had she been content to remain true to the Matilda Heron transcription, and had she applied to it her theory of dressing *Camille* according to her period, she would have met with great success. I agree with Archer that "the day is fast approaching when 'Caste' will have to be played in the costumes of the '60's." It will be interesting to see whether ceasing to regard this comedy's manners and sentiments as contemporaneous will obliterate it altogether from stage history.

Robertson was born of a theatrical family. His father, William Robertson, was an actor of the old school, and a manager; so, likewise, was his great-grandfather. Tom, born on January 9, 1829, at Newark-on-Trent, and his sister, Madge, who afterwards became Mrs. Kendall, sustained the family tradition. The early youth of Tom Robertson, outside of school, was spent in the theatre. He was only five when he began playing juvenile parts, and intermittently he pursued his studies at Spalding Academy and elsewhere, becoming noted thus early for his superabundant wit.

In 1843, his father assumed the management of the Lincoln Company, and called his son into service as a scene painter, a prompter, a writer of songs, and an adapter of many plays, including one by Dickens. If the full story were told of these years, it would be a most interesting record of the provincial English touring system, into which Robertson threw himself with energy, acting any part from *Hamlet* to the *Ghost*, and changing quickly from *Surface* to *Doctor Pangloss*.

The declining fortunes of the Robertson family were due probably to the declining influence of the circuit system. And, in 1848, Robertson went to London,

a significant move for one without money, but with a great diffuseness and variety of talent. For some time, he tutored at Utrecht, having become proficient in French, but the mere pittance he made scarcely kept him from starving. It was in 1851 that, at the Olympic Theatre, Robertson's first play, "A Night's Adventures", was produced by William Farren, and we are told that this old actor in gross outspokenness declared that it was "a damned bad play", to which the ever-ready Robertson replied, "Not so damned bad as the acting." The anecdote is not so significant as it is representative of the alertness of the Robertson repartee — an alertness which won for him many friends, and fitted him for his task as an associate on the contributing staff of *Fun*. Stamped as a wit, Robertson made friends with the wits of the time. In his acting experience, he soon became acquainted with Henry J. Byron, and played with him on several occasions. The two had many grim experiences with poverty, each pledging the other that if successful he would be true to the one on whom fortune failed to smile.

Farren, however, knew a good thing when he saw it. He bought another play from Robertson for three pounds, and the three-pound habit passed on to Charles Matthews and Madame Vestris, who employed Robertson as prompter of the Olympic when they took charge. The work that Robertson did was of the "pot-boiler" quality. As fast as he would write his little pieces, some of them original, and others adaptations, he would sell them to Lacy, the publisher, for a nominal sum. This work not being very profitable, he tried to enlist in the army. It was a life, as Robertson said afterwards, of irregular habits and loose salary, and might easily have been a tragedy.

In 1856, he married Miss Elizabeth Burton, and the two went to Dublin as leading lady and eccentric comedian. It was on the death of a little daughter that Robertson definitely retired from the stage and began writing for the magazines, and translating plays for Lacy.

But literature for him did not seem to flourish any more. We are told that at one time Robertson seriously thought of giving up writing and turning tobacconist. Small income came from his theatrical criticisms in the *Illustrated Times*, edited by Henry Vizetelly, and in the *Comic News*, edited by H. J. Byron. Even novel writing proved unsuccessful, though little did Robertson realize at the time he wrote his story, "David Garrick", based on Mélesville's three-act play, "Sullivan", that this would be the beginning of his career. Here is a strange indication of the way in which dramas were evolved on the British stage in those days: a novel is shaped out of a French play, and a dramatization of that novel results in the script of "David Garrick", which Robertson sold to Lacy for ten pounds.

Some years after, E. A. Sothern, the famous comedian, who had met with such success in *Dundreary*, was looking about for some drama to refute the belief of Thackeray and John Leech that it would be difficult for him to duplicate his success. A casual conversation with the actor brought the play of "Garrick" to the fore, and Sothern gave Robertson the money to buy the rights back from Lacy, and even went so far as to advance him fifty pounds royalties. It was produced at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham, April, 1864, and met with great success, even though the critics scored Sothern because they thought his voice not fitted for love-making. In after years, a dispute arose between Sothern and Tom Robertson as to the originality of the piece, and they both claimed the writing of the drunken scene, even as there was some dispute over individual touches in "Home", a

Robertson comedy produced by Sothern at the Haymarket, in 1869. "Home", however, was not an original play at the start, for it was taken from Augier's "L'Aventurière." "David Garrick" afterwards became a steadfast addition to the repertory of the actor, Sir Charles Wyndham.

The significant date in the career of Tom Robertson was November 11, 1865, when, at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, in London, the Bancrofts produced his play of Bohemian manners, "Society." It established the fortunes of every one concerned.

We get a glimpse of the Robertson of this time in a description preserved by Squire Bancroft himself, who believed that the Robertson comedies saved the English theatre and revived an intelligent interest in the drama, infusing a naturalness into stage work which did much to encourage a natural school of acting. He says of Robertson:

> He was of a highly nervous temperament, and he had a great habit of biting his moustache and caressing his beard — indeed, his hands were rarely still. He was at that time thirty-six, above medium height, and rather stoutly built, with a pale skin, and reddish beard, and small, piercing, red-brown eyes which were ever restless.

Following his first success, came "Ours" (September 16, 1866), "Caste" (April 6, 1867), "Play" (February 15, 1868), "School" (Jauuary 14, 1869), and "M.P." (April 23, 1870).

Managers began to compete for his dramas, and he turned them out with a rapidity which was startling and dangerous to his permanence as a playwright. Such actors as Lester Wallack, noted for their picturesque, often flamboyant, romanticism, became startled over the new régime of acting set in motion by Tom Robertson. He was noted for his thoroughness of preparation. W. S. Gilbert, whose friendship with him began as early as 1869, at a dinner given to the literary staff of *Fun*, once declared:

> I frequently attended his rehearsals and learnt a great deal from his method of stage-management, which in those days was quite a novelty, although most pieces are now stage-managed on the principles he introduced. I look upon stage-management, as now understood, as having been absolutely "invented" by him.

As for the acting upheld and well founded by the Bancrofts, who encouraged the first work of John Hare, we have the confession of Wallack that, however easy he himself might have considered Sheridan's mode of characterization to be, his greatest difficulty was in studying the extreme modern school of writing. And he said further:

> In speaking Tom Robertson's lines, for instance, one is talking "every-day talk." It looks very easy, but it is most difficult, for if you are illustrating Sheridan or Shakespeare, you are speaking in a language that is new to you; which on that account impresses you all the more; whereas, if you have a speech from Tom Robertson or Boucicault, you can give it just as well in two or three different ways.

One can gain a clear idea of the freshness of the Robertson comedy, as it impressed itself upon the London theatre-going public, by reading the criticisms of the time. Exclamations arose on all sides at what one critic designated as the simplicity of scene and the "accumulation of incidents and satire more interesting and more poignant than might be found in all the sensational dramas of the last half century."

Another significant thing to the critics of the period regarding Robertson was that, whereas it had become a popular fetish that the English were only interested in French adaptations, and whereas the managers had raised an almost insuperable barrier against originality — a barrier which poor Boucicault found difficult to surmount, and which afforded the theatre an opportunity of securing a miscellaneous assortment of plays for the mere hack price of translation — here was a dramatist who suddenly raised the value of the home product, and raised himself above the degraded position of mere literary and theatrical carpenter. Robertson was naïve about his sudden success and his long-awaited release from poverty. He is reported to have said, speaking of his actor experiences:

> Those were the days when I had one meal a day and three parts a night to play — now I have three meals a day and no part to play, and for this relief Providence has my most heartfelt thanks.

If one compares the stage directions of the period of James Sheridan Knowles with the stage directions of the Shavian drama, one will find a wider difference in intent and purpose, the latter being so nearly in accord with the realistic novelist's summing up of psychology and motive. Robertson laid the foundation for the modern school of stage direction. He put a stop to the spontaneous horseplay and "gags" of the earlier actor, who introduced dialogue at will into a play, as the spirit moved him.

William Archer, after raising such interesting questions as "Did Robertson initiate the modern English drama?" "Is he the intellectual ancestor of Mr. Pinero and Mr. Oscar Wilde?" "Is the 'Second Mrs. Tanqueray' implicit in 'Caste'?" "Did the Robertson impetus die away in Mr. Byron and Mr. Godfrey, while Mr. Pinero, Mr. Wilde and Mr. Jones are the products of a still newer movement?" "Is Mr. Carton, perhaps, the one survivor of 'The tribe of Tom'?" goes on to say:

> I am inclined to regard Robertson as a man with a curious instinct of superficial modernity, of which his intimate knowledge of stage-effect enabled him to make the most, but without the psychological penetration, the philosophical culture, or the artistic seriousness necessary for the great dramatist. He has been called the Thackeray of the stage, — I should rather call him the Leech, inasmuch as his criticism of life is that of the family caricaturist rather than of the philosophic satirist.

We take this estimate as a fair approach, in these more modern days, of Tom Robertson. His value is to be found, not so much in comparison with the work which followed him, as in contrast with the work which preceded him. And if this latter estimate is taken, one cannot deny his significance as a milepost in the development of the Victorian drama.

A full list of his plays would scarcely add more to the impression of Tom Robertson. His comedies were filled with satire, with a certain tenderness, a certain wit,

and an appreciation of the small needs of common life. His writing for the stage was characterized as the "teacup-and-saucer" drama, a phrase which, in America, at a somewhat later period, passed on to David Belasco, in the form of the "milk-and-water" school of acting, which that manager established at the New York Madison Square Theatre, in contradistinction to the broad romance of Lester Wallack. Some day, an adequate edition of Robertson's plays will be available, outside the few copies now extant in reference libraries. These plays are representative of the writing done for the Bancrofts, although the long list contained in the "Dictionary of National Biography" indicates that one must wade through a large amount of good, bad, and indifferent, in order to reach conclusions which are easily formulated by taking a few representative plays with which to measure him.

Robertson was a good fellow; a social mixer with Tom Hood, Gilbert, the Broughs, Joseph Knight, the Vizetellys, E. L. Blanchard, and John Oxenford. His success with this group encouraged in him a cheerful cynicism, if one can use the term, and discovered in him a certain kindliness which is apparent in all of his plays. Wit was dominant in everything he wrote, even in the dramatization of "David Copperfield", given in 1869, when Robertson first met Dickens. The latter applauded what he called the dramatist's unassuming form, and said that in Robertson's plays "real wit could afford to put off any airs of pretension to it."

The autobiographical value of Robertson's plays is evident. Incidents in "Society" were drawn from life. "Dreams" is in part a confession of his early difficulties. The biographer must likewise rely on Pinero's impression of Robertson in "Trelawny of the 'Wells.'"

Contemporary criticism of the Robertson school is reflected in the writings of John Oxenford, who was then supreme dramatic critic on the London *Times*. It is likewise to be found in the reviews of Clement Scott. Both these men, born and bred of the Victorian era, give the right perspective of the professional attitude toward the new realism which Robertson introduced into the theatre. Scott emphasizes the dependence of the English people upon French drama, by telling this anecdote: when "Ours" was announced for production, the London papers insisted on thinking that the name of the play was "L'Ours", French for "The Bear." He also calls attention to Robertson's use of scenes spoken off stage, as a modern detail, as characteristic as the old time "aside."

"Caste" was founded on a tale written by Robertson, in 1866, and published in a collection of short stories, edited by Tom Hood, called "Rates and Taxes and How They Were Collected." In this volume there was fiction by W. S. Gilbert and Clement Scott. Robertson's contribution was "The Poor Rate Unfolds a Tale." A reading of this story shows the richness Robertson infused into the play evolved from it.

The comedy was dedicated to Marie Wilton (Mrs. Bancroft) and, as we have said, was given at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, London, Saturday, April 6, 1867.

Augustin Filon, in "The English Stage", is correct in his estimate of Robertson, which may be applied directly to "Caste":

> It would be but an ill service to Robertson to give an outline of his plays. A mere outline would give the impression that they were childish and absurd, and they were neither the one nor the other. He never invented a striking situation, so far as I am aware. He never settled (or even raised) a moral or social problem in any of his productions. He gave all his attention to the

> characters and the dialogue. . . . He wanted nothing better than to be a realist and to reproduce what he had actually seen. He knew nothing of great ladies, as one may well understand. When he had to portray them he was obliged to copy from bad models. His *Lady Ptarmigant* is a regular *bourgeoise;* his *Marquise de Saint Maur*, who learns bits of Froissart by heart, and gives lessons in history to her son, is either a myth or an anachronism. His *Hawtree*, on the other hand, is as real as can be; Robertson had met him probably in the clubs which he frequented.

In the study of "Caste", one will, as Mr. Archer says, note how contemporaneousness seizes hold of a dramatist and stamps itself upon the dialogue. There are definite references to the Indian Mutiny and to the ballet at Covent Garden. But apart from this, as Mr. Archer confesses:

> It is curious to remember that "Caste" (produced in 1867) is now (1904) just as old as "Money" and "London Assurance" were when "Caste" was new. Yet the distance that separates them from "Caste" in tone and diction appears infinitely greater than the distance between "Caste" and "Liberty Hall", which is very slight indeed.

One can imagine the sensation which was created among the Bancroft company, when Tom Robertson brought his script of "Caste", and read the play to them. Little did they think upon what a triumphant career they were launching the play, which has held the stage ever since that time, being revived, again and again, with notable casts. The part of *Eccles*, known to a later generation through the distinctive characterization work done by Sir John Hare, is one which calls for special character-acting — a type of character-acting which is now dying out. As one critic remarked, after a later revival of "Caste", if the play was coldly received it was not due to loss of freshness on the part of Robertson, but rather to a sad depreciation in the acting which had originally brought it to success.

In the evolutionary career of Bernard Shaw, "Caste" has played its small part. He confesses, in his "Dramatic Opinions and Essays", that the Robertsonian movement caught him as a boy, the Ibsen movement caught him as a man, and whatever next movement there is to be will catch him as a fossil. There is the usual Shavian wit when he gets down to real criticism. We find him excellently discriminating, and resentful of Robertson's view of the working classes in *Eccles* and *Gerridge*, which he claimed to be worthy of the untrustworthiness of Dickens. But, despite his irritation, Shaw is fair enough to call attention to the fact that even *Eccles* and *Gerridge* were something in the mid-century Victorian days, when there was a shabby-genteel ignorance of the working classes.

He writes:

> Let it not be forgotten that in both [*Eccles* and *Gerridge*] there really is a humanization, as humanization was understood in the '60's: that is a discovery of saving sympathetic qualities in personages thitherto deemed beyond redemption. Even theology had to be humanized then by the rejection of the old doctrine of eternal punishment.

This fair recognition on the part of Shaw must be the same recognition given by the modern reader who studies the play.

In America, the piece was pirated in its original production by W. J. Florence.

The stage history of "Caste" is epitomized in W. Davenport Adams's "Dictionary of the Drama."

A study of Robertson involves a study of the period in which he lived. It takes up a consideration of the humourists who have been discussed elsewhere in this volume; it records the beginnings of a brilliant history of acting; it is involved in the making of several players whose reputations are now a part of the history of the English stage. Tom Robertson was brought in contact with fixed ideas in play-writing, with stage management as represented by the gruff, overbearing Buckstone. When he died, on February 3, 1871, he had helped to change the conditions which had at first handicapped him. Little did Buckstone think, when he wrote "Rubbish" on the fly-leaf of the manuscript copy of "Society", that it would be preserved in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford. It was "rubbish" to him, not because of its dramaturgy, but because it upset the conventional notions of the Haymarket Theatre which he managed. We must take Tom Robertson as a forerunner of Pinero and Jones. While we can understand W. B. Yeats's remark that such plays as "Caste" require little awakening knowledge for their consumption, yet, when the play was first given, it not only brought to the Victorian audience a certain refreshing human point of view, but it likewise brought to the English stage a decided realistic note which took the drama out of the vacuous atmosphere of romantic unreality.

CASTE

By T. W. ROBERTSON

TO

MISS MARIE WILTON

(*MRS. BANCROFT*)

THIS COMEDY IS DEDICATED
BY
HER GRATEFUL FRIEND
AND
FELLOW LABOURER
THE AUTHOR

CAST OF CHARACTERS

	Prince of Wales's Theatre, London, April 6, 1867	*Broadway Theatre, New York, August 5, 1867*
HON. GEORGE D'ALROY . .	Mr. Frederick Younge	Mr. W. J. Florence
CAPTAIN HAWTREE	Mr. Bancroft	Mr. Owen Marlowe
ECCLES	Mr. George Honey	Mr. Wm. Davidge
SAM GERRIDGE	Mr. Hare	Mr. Edward Lamb
DIXON	———	———
MARQUISE DE ST. MAUR . .	Miss Larkin	Mrs. G. H. Gilbert
ESTHER ECCLES	Miss Marie Wilton	Mrs. S. F. Chanfrau
POLLY ECCLES	Miss Lydia Foote	Mrs. W. J. Florence

ACT I. The Little House at Stangate . . . . COURTSHIP
ACT II. The Lodgings in Mayfair . . . . MATRIMONY
ACT III. The Little House in Stangate . . . . WIDOWHOOD

A lapse of eight months occurs between the first and the second Act, and a lapse of twelve months between the second and the third.

CASTE

ACT I

Scene First. — *A plain set chamber, paper soiled. A window, with practicable blind; street backing and iron railings. Door practicable, when opened showing street door (practicable). Fireplace; two-hinged gas-burners on each side of mantel-piece. Sideboard cupboard, cupboard in recess; tea-things, tea-pot, tea-caddy, tea-tray, etc., on it. Long table, before fire; old piece of carpet and rug down; plain chairs; book-shelf, back; a small table under it with ballet-shoe and skirt on it; bunch of benefit bills hanging under book-shelf. Theatrical printed portraits, framed, hanging about; chimney glass clock; box of lucifers and ornaments on mantel-shelf; kettle on hob, and fire laid; door-mats on the outside of door. Bureau in lower right-hand corner. Rapping heard at door, the handle is then shaken as curtain rises. The door is unlocked.*

[*Enter* George D'Alroy.]

George D'Alroy. Told you so; the key was left under the mat in case I came. They're not back from rehearsal. [*Hangs up hat on peg near door as* Hawtree *enters*] Confound rehearsal!

[*Crosses to fireplace*]

Hawtree [*back to audience, looking round*]. And this is the fairy's bower!

George. Yes; and this is the fairy's fireplace; the fire is laid. I'll light it.

[*Lights fire with lucifer from mantel-piece*]

Hawtree [*turning to* George]. And this is the abode rendered blessed by her abiding. It is here that she dwells, walks, talks, — eats and drinks. Does she eat and drink?

George. Yes, heartily. I've seen her.

Hawtree. And you are really spoons! — case of true love — hit — dead.

George. Right through. Can't live away from her.

[*With elbow on end of mantel-piece, down stage*]

Hawtree. Poor old Dal! and you've brought me over the water to —

George. Stangate.

Hawtree. Stangate — to see her for the same sort of reason that when a patient is in a dangerous state one doctor calls in another — for a consultation.

George. Yes. Then the patient dies.

Hawtree. Tell us about it — you know I've been away.

[*Sits at table, leg on chair.*

George. Well then, eighteen months ago —

Hawtree. Oh cut that! you told me all about that. You went to a theatre, and saw a girl in a ballet, and you fell in love.

George. Yes. I found out that she was an amiable, good girl.

Hawtree. Of course; cut that. We'll credit her with all the virtues and accomplishments.

George. Who worked hard to support a drunken father.

Hawtree. Oh! the father's a drunkard, is he? The father does not inherit the daughter's virtues?

George. No. I hate him.

Hawtree. Naturally. Quite so! Quite so!

George. And she — that is, Esther — is very good to her younger sister.

Hawtree. Younger sister also angelic, amiable, accomplished, etc.

George. Um — good enough, but got a temper — large temper. Well, with some difficulty, I got to speak to her. I mean to Esther. Then I was allowed to see her to her door here.

Hawtree. I know — pastry-cooks — Richmond dinner — and all that.

George. You're too fast. Pastry-cooks — yes. Richmond — no. Your

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knowledge of the world, fifty yards round barracks, misleads you. I saw her nearly every day, and I kept on falling in love — falling and falling, until I thought I should never reach the bottom; then I met you.

HAWTREE. I remember the night when you told me; but I thought it was only an amourette. However, if the fire is a conflagration, subdue it; try dissipation.

GEORGE. I have.

HAWTREE. What success?

GEORGE. None; dissipation brought me bad health and self-contempt, a sick head and a sore heart.

HAWTREE. Foreign travel; absence makes the heart grow [*slight pause*] — stronger. Get leave and cut away.

GEORGE. I did get leave, and I did cut away; and while away I was miserable and a gon-er coon than ever.

HAWTREE. What's to be done?

[*Sits cross-legged on chair, facing* GEORGE]

GEORGE. Don't know. That's the reason I asked you to come over and see.

HAWTREE. Of course, Dal, you're not such a soft as to think of marriage. You know what your mother is. Either you are going to behave properly, with a proper regard for the world, and all that, you know; or you're going to do the other thing. Now, the question is, what do you mean to do? The girl is a nice girl, no doubt; but as to your making her Mrs. D'Alroy, the thing is out of the question.

GEORGE. Why? What should prevent me?

HAWTREE. Caste! — the inexorable law of caste. The social law, so becoming and so good, that commands like to mate with like, and forbids a giraffe to fall in love with a squirrel.

GEORGE. But my dear Bark —

HAWTREE. My dear Dal, all those marriages of people with common people are all very well in novels and plays on the stage, because the real people don't exist, and have no relatives who exist, and no connections, and so no harm's done, and it's rather interesting to look at; but in real life with real relations, and real mothers and so forth, it's absolute bosh; it's worse, it's utter social and personal annihilation and damnation.

GEORGE. As to my mother, I haven't thought about her.

[*Sits corner of table*]

HAWTREE. Of course not. Lovers are so damned selfish; they never think of anybody but themselves.

GEORGE. My father died when I was three years old, and she married again before I was six, and married a Frenchman.

HAWTREE. A nobleman of the most ancient families of France, of equal blood to her own. She obeyed the duties imposed on her by her station and by caste.

GEORGE. Still, it caused a separation and a division between us, and I never see my brother, because he lives abroad. Of course the Marquise de St. Maur is my mother, and I look upon her with a sort of superstitious awe.

[*Moves chair with which he has been twisting about during speech from table to left corner.*

HAWTREE. She's a grand Brahmin priestess.

GEORGE. Just so; and I know I'm a fool. Now you're clever, Bark, — a little too clever, I think. You're paying your devoirs — that's the correct word, isn't it — to Lady Florence Carberry, the daughter of a countess. She's above you — you've no title. Is she to forget *her* caste?

HAWTREE. That argument doesn't apply. A man can be no more than a gentleman.

GEORGE.

"True hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

HAWTREE. Now, George, if you're going to consider this question from the point of view of poetry, you're off to No-Man's Land, where I won't follow you.

GEORGE. No gentleman can be ashamed of the woman he loves. No matter what her original station, once his wife he raises her to his rank.

HAWTREE. Yes, he raises her; — *her;* but her connections — her relatives. How about them?

[ECCLES *enters*]

ECCLES [*Outside*]. Polly! Polly! Polly! [*Enters*] Why the devil —

[GEORGE *crosses to* HAWTREE, *who rises.* ECCLES *sees them and assumes a deferential manner*]

ECCLES. Oh, Mr. De-Alroy! I didn't see you, sir. Good afternoon; the same to you, sir, and many on 'em

[*Puts hat on bureau and comes down*]

HAWTREE. Who is this?

GEORGE. This is papa.

HAWTREE. Ah!

[*Turns up to book-shelf, scanning* ECCLES *through eye-glass*]

GEORGE. Miss Eccles and her sister not returned from rehearsal yet?

ECCLES. No, sir, they have not. I expect 'em in directly. I hope you've been quite well since I seen you last, sir?

GEORGE. Quite, thank you; and how have you been, Mr. Eccles?

ECCLES. Well, sir, I have not been the thing at all. My 'elth, sir, and my spirits is both broke. I'm not the man I used to be. I am not accustomed to this sort of thing. I've seen better days, but they are gone — most like for ever. It is a melancholy thing, sir, for a man of my time of life to look back on better days that are gone most like for ever.

GEORGE. I daresay.

ECCLES. Once proud and prosperous, now poor and lowly. Once master of a shop, I am now, by the pressure of circumstances over which I have no control, driven to seek work and not to find it. Poverty is a dreadful thing, sir, for a man as has once been well off.

GEORGE. I daresay.

ECCLES [*sighing*]. Ah, sir, the poor and lowly is often 'ardly used. What chance has the working-man?

HAWTREE. None when he don't work.

ECCLES. We are all equal in mind and feeling.

GEORGE. [*Aside*] I hope not.

ECCLES. I am sorry, gentlemen, that I cannot offer you any refreshment; but luxury and me has long been strangers.

GEORGE. I am very sorry for your misfortunes, Mr. Eccles. [*Looking round at* HAWTREE, *who turns away*] May I hope that you will allow me to offer you this trifling loan?

[*Giving him half a sovereign*]

ECCLES. Sir, you're a gentleman. One can tell a real gentleman with half a sov — I mean half an eye — a real gentleman understands the natural emotions of the working-man. Pride, sir, is a thing as should be put down by the strong 'and of pecuniary necessity. There's a friend of mine round the corner as I promised to meet on a little matter of business; so if you will excuse me, sir —

GEORGE. With pleasure.

ECCLES [*going up*]. Sorry to leave you, gentlemen, but —

GEORGE. Don't stay on my account.

HAWTREE. Don't mention it.

ECCLES. Business is business. [*Goes up*] The girls will be in directly. Good afternoon, gentlemen, — good afternoon — [*Going out*] Good afternoon. [*Exit*]

[GEORGE *sits in chair, corner of table, right*]

HAWTREE [*coming down left of table*]. Papa is not nice, but —

[*Sitting on corner of table down stage*]

"True hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

Poor George! I wonder what your mamma — the Most Noble the Marquise de St. Maur — would think of Papa Eccles. Come, Dal, allow that there *is something* in caste. Conceive that dirty ruffian — that rinsing of stale beer — that walking tap-room, for a father-in-law. Take a spin to Central America. Forget her.

GEORGE. Can't.

HAWTREE. You'll be wretched and miserable with her.

GEORGE. I'd rather be wretched with her than miserable without her. [HAWTREE *takes out cigar case*] Don't smoke here!

HAWTREE. Why not?

GEORGE. She'll be coming in directly.

HAWTREE. I don't think she'd mind.

GEORGE. I should. Do you smoke before Lady Florence Carberry?

HAWTREE [*closing case*]. Ha! You're suffering from a fit of the morals.

GEORGE. What's that?

HAWTREE. The morals is a disease, like the measles, that attacks the young and innocent.

GEORGE [*with temper*]. You talk like Mephistopheles, without the cleverness.

[*Goes up the window and looks at watch*]

HAWTREE [*arranging cravat at glass*]. I don't pretend to be a particularly good sort of fellow, nor a particularly bad sort of fellow. I suppose I'm about the average standard sort of thing, and I don't like to see a friend go down hill to the devil while I can put the drag on. [*Turning, with back to fire*] Here is a girl of very humble station — poor, and all that, with a drunken father, who

evidently doesn't care how he gets money so long as he don't work for it. Marriage! Pah! Couldn't the thing be arranged?

GEORGE. Hawtree, cut that! [*At window*] She's here!

[*Goes to door and opens it*]

[*Enter* ESTHER]

GEORGE [*flurried at sight of her*]. Good morning. I got here before you, you see.

ESTHER. Good morning.

[*Sees* HAWTREE — *slight pause, in which* HAWTREE *has removed his hat*]

GEORGE. I've taken the liberty — I hope you won't be angry — of asking you to let me present a friend of mine to you; Miss Eccles — Captain Hawtree.

[HAWTREE *bows.* GEORGE *assists* ESTHER *in taking off bonnet and shawl*]

HAWTREE. [*Aside*] Pretty.

ESTHER. [*Aside*] Thinks too much of himself.

GEORGE [*hangs up bonnet and shawl on pegs*]. You've had a late rehearsal. Where's Polly?

ESTHER. She stayed behind to buy something.

[*Enter* POLLY]

POLLY [*head through door*]. How do do, Mr. D'Alroy? Oh! I'm tired to death. Kept at rehearsal by an old fool of a stage manager. But stage managers are always old fools, — except when they are young. We sha'n't have time for any dinner, so I've brought something for tea.

ESTHER. What is it?

POLLY. Ham. [*Showing ham in paper.* ESTHER *sits right, at window. Crossing. Seeing* HAWTREE] Oh! I beg your pardon, sir. I didn't see you.

GEORGE. A friend of mine, Mary. Captain Hawtree — Miss Mary Eccles.

[GEORGE *sits at window.* POLLY *bows very low, to left, to right, and to front, half burlesquely, to* HAWTREE]

HAWTREE. Charmed.

POLLY. [*Aside*] What a swell. Got nice teeth, and he knows it. How quiet we all are; let's talk about something.

[*Hangs up her hat. She crosses to fire round table, front.* HAWTREE *crosses and places hat on bureau*]

ESTHER. What can we talk about?

POLLY. Anything. Ham. Mr. D'Alroy, do you like ham?

GEORGE. I adore her — [POLLY *titters*] — I mean I adore it.

POLLY. [*To* HAWTREE, *who has crossed to table watching* POLLY *undo paper containing ham. She turns the plate on top of the ham still in the paper, then throws the paper aside and triumphantly brings the plate under* HAWTREE'S *nose,* HAWTREE *giving a little start back*] Do you like ham, sir? [*Very tragically*]

HAWTREE. Yes.

POLLY. Now that is very strange. I should have thought you'd have been above ham. [*Getting tea-tray*]

HAWTREE. May one ask why?

POLLY. You look above it. You look quite equal to tongue — glazed. [*Laughing*] Mr. D'Alroy is here so often that he knows our ways.

[*Getting tea-things from sideboard and placing them on table*]

HAWTREE. I like everything that is piquante and fresh, and pretty and agreeable.

POLLY [*laying table all the time for tea*]. Ah! you mean that for me. [*Curtseying*] Oh! [*Sings*] Tra, la, la, la, la, la. [*Flourishes cup in his face; he retreats a step*] Now I must put the kettle on. [GEORGE *and* ESTHER *are at window*] Esther never does any work when Mr. D'Alroy is here. They're spooning; ugly word, spooning, isn't it? — reminds one of red-currant jam. By the bye, love *is* very like red-currant jam — at the first taste sweet, and afterwards shuddery. Do you ever spoon?

HAWTREE [*leaning across table*]. I should like to do so at this moment.

POLLY. I daresay you would. No, you're too grand for me. You want taking down a peg — I mean a foot. Let's see — what are you — a corporal?

HAWTREE. Captain.

POLLY. I prefer a corporal. See here. Let's change about. You be corporal — it'll do you good, and I'll be "my lady."

HAWTREE. Pleasure.

POLLY. You must call me "my lady", though, or you sha'n't have any ham.

HAWTREE. Certainly, "my lady"; but I cannot accept your hospitality, for I'm engaged to dine.

POLLY. At what time?

HAWTREE. Seven.

POLLY. Seven! Why, that's half-

past tea-time. Now, Corporal, you must wait on me.

HAWTREE. As the pages did of old.

POLLY. "My lady."

HAWTREE. "My lady."

POLLY. Here's the kettle, Corporal.

[*Holding out kettle at arm's length.* HAWTREE *looks at it through eye-glass*]

HAWTREE. Very nice kettle.

POLLY. Take it into the back kitchen.

HAWTREE. Eh!

POLLY. Oh, I'm coming too.

HAWTREE. Ah! that alters the case.

[*He takes out handkerchief and then takes hold of kettle — crosses as* GEORGE *rises and comes down, slapping* HAWTREE *on back.* HAWTREE *immediately places kettle on the floor.* POLLY *throws herself into chair by fireside up stage, and roars with laughter.* GEORGE *and* ESTHER *laugh*]

GEORGE. What are you about?

HAWTREE. I'm about to fill the kettle.

ESTHER [*going to* POLLY]. Mind what you are doing, Polly. What will Sam say?

POLLY. Whatever Sam chooses. What the sweetheart can't see the husband can't grieve at. Now then — Corporal!

HAWTREE. "My lady!"

[*Takes up kettle*]

POLLY. Attention! Forward! March! and mind the soot don't drop upon your trousers.

[*Exeunt* POLLY *and* HAWTREE, HAWTREE *first*]

ESTHER. What a girl it is — all spirits! The worst is that it is so easy to mistake her!

GEORGE. And so easy to find out your mistake. [*They cross down stage,* ESTHER *first*] But why won't you let me present you with a piano?

[*Following* ESTHER]

ESTHER. I don't want one.

GEORGE. You said you were fond of playing.

ESTHER. We may be fond of many things without having them. [*Leaning against end of table. Taking out letter*] Now here is a gentleman says he is attached to me.

GEORGE [*jealous*]. May I know his name?

ESTHER. What for? It would be useless, as his solicitations —

[*Throws letter into fire*]

GEORGE. I lit that fire.

ESTHER. Then burn these, too. [GEORGE *crosses to fire*] No, not that. [*Taking one back*] I must keep that; burn the others.

[GEORGE *throws letters on fire, crosses back of table quickly — takes hat from peg and goes to door as if leaving hurriedly.* ESTHER *takes chair from table and goes to centre of stage with it, noticing* GEORGE'*s manner.* GEORGE *hesitates at door. Shuts it quickly, hangs his hat up again, and comes down to back of chair in which* ESTHER *has seated herself*]

GEORGE. Who is that from?

ESTHER. Why do you wish to know?

GEORGE. Because I love you, and I don't think you love me, and I fear a rival.

ESTHER. You have none.

GEORGE. I know you have so many admirers.

ESTHER. They're nothing to me.

GEORGE. Not one?

ESTHER. No. They're admirers, but there's not a husband among them.

GEORGE. Not the writer of that letter?

ESTHER [*coquettishly*]. Oh, I like him very much.

GEORGE [*sighing*]. Ah!

ESTHER. And I'm very fond of this letter.

GEORGE. Then, Esther, you don't care for me.

ESTHER. Don't I? How do you know?

GEORGE. Because you won't let me read that letter.

ESTHER. It won't please you if you see it.

GEORGE. I daresay not. That's just the reason that I want to. You won't?

ESTHER [*hesitates*]. I will. There!

[*Giving it to him*]

GEORGE [*reads*]. "Dear Madam."

ESTHER. That's tender, isn't it?

GEORGE. "The terms are four pounds — your dresses to be found. For eight weeks certain, and longer if you should suit. [*In astonishment*] I cannot close the engagement until the return of my partner. I expect him back to-day, and I will write you as soon as I have seen him. Yours very,"

etc. Four pounds — find dresses. What does this mean?

ESTHER. It means that they want a Columbine for the Pantomime at Manchester, and I think I shall get the engagement.

GEORGE. Manchester; then you'll leave London?

ESTHER. I must. [*Pathetically*] You see this little house is on my shoulders. Polly only earns eighteen shillings a week, and father has been out of work a long, long time. I make the bread here, and it's hard to make sometimes. I've been mistress of this place, and forced to think ever since my mother died, and I was eight years old. Four pounds a week is a large sum, and I can save out of it.

[*This speech is not to be spoken in a tone implying hardship*]

GEORGE. But you'll go away, and I sha'n't see you.

ESTHER. P'raps it will be for the best. [*Rises and crosses*] What future is there for us? You're a man of rank, and I am a poor girl who gets her living by dancing. It would have been better that we had never met.

GEORGE. No.

ESTHER. Yes, it would, for I'm afraid that —

GEORGE. You love me?

ESTHER. I don't know. I'm not sure; but I think I do.

[*Stops and turns half-face to* GEORGE]

GEORGE [*trying to seize her hand*]. Esther!

ESTHER. No. Think of the difference of our stations.

GEORGE. That's what Hawtree says! Caste! caste! curse caste! [*Goes up*]

ESTHER. If I go to Manchester it will be for the best. We must both try to forget each other.

GEORGE [*comes down by table*]. Forget you! no, Esther; let me — [*Seizing her hand*]

POLLY. [*Without*] Mind what you're about. Oh dear! oh dear!

[GEORGE *and* ESTHER *sit in window seat*]

[*Enter* POLLY *and* HAWTREE]

POLLY. You nasty, great clumsy Corporal, you've spilt the water all over my frock. Oh dear! [*Coming down.* HAWTREE *puts kettle on ham on table*] Take it off the ham! [HAWTREE *then places it on the mantel-piece*] No, no! put it in the fireplace. [HAWTREE *does so*] You've spoilt my frock. [*Sitting*]

HAWTREE. Allow me to offer you a new one. [*Crossing*]

POLLY. No, I won't. You'll be calling to see how it looks when it's on. Haven't you got a handkerchief?

HAWTREE. Yes.

POLLY. Then wipe it dry.

[HAWTREE *bends almost on one knee, and wipes dress. Enter* SAM, *whistling. Throws cap into* HAWTREE'S *hat on drawers*]

SAM [*sulkily*]. Arternoon — yer didn't hear me knock! — the door was open. I'm afraid I intrude.

POLLY. No, you don't. We're glad to see you if you've got a handkerchief. Help to wipe this dry.

[SAM *pulls out handkerchief from slop, and dropping on one knee snatches skirt of dress from* HAWTREE, *who looks up surprised*]

HAWTREE. I'm very sorry. [*Rising*] I beg your pardon.

[*Business;* SAM *stares* HAWTREE *out*]

POLLY. It won't spoil it.

SAM. The stain won't come out. [*Rising*]

POLLY. It's only water.

SAM. [*To* ESTHER] Arternoon, Miss Eccles. [*To* GEORGE] Arternoon, sir! [POLLY *rises. To* POLLY] Who's the other swell?

POLLY. I'll introduce you. Captain Hawtree — Mr. Samuel Gerridge.

HAWTREE. Charmed, I'm sure. [*Staring at* SAM *through eye-glass.* SAM *acknowledges* HAWTREE'S *recognition by a "chuck" of the head over left shoulder; going up to* GEORGE] Who's this?

GEORGE. Polly's sweetheart.

HAWTREE. Oh! Now if I can be of no further assistance, I'll go.

[*Comes over back down to drawers*]

POLLY. Going, Corporal?

HAWTREE. Yaas! [*Business; taking up hat and stick from bureau he sees* SAM'S *cap. He picks it out carefully, and coming down stage examines it as a curiosity, drops it on the floor and pushes it away with his stick, at the same time moving backwards, causing him to bump against* SAM, *who turns round savagely*] I beg your pardon. [*Crossing up stage*] George, will you — [GEORGE *takes no notice*] Will you —?

GEORGE. What!

HAWTREE. Go with me?

GEORGE. Go? No!

HAWTREE [*coming down to* POLLY]. Then, Miss Eccles — I mean "my lady."

[*Shaking hands and going; as he backs away bumps against* SAM, *and business repeated,* HAWTREE *close to door keeping his eye on* SAM, *who has shown signs of anger*]

POLLY. Good-bye, Corporal!

HAWTREE. [*At door*] Good-bye! Good afternoon, Mr. — Mr. — er — Pardon me.

SAM [*with constrained rage*]. Gerridge, sir — Gerridge.

HAWTREE [*as if remembering name*]. Ah! Gerridge. Good-day. [*Exit*]

SAM [*turning to* POLLY *in awful rage*]. Who's that fool? Who's that long idiot?

POLLY. I told you; Captain Hawtree.

SAM. What's 'e want 'ere?

POLLY. He's a friend of Mr. D'Alroy's.

SAM. Ugh! Isn't one of 'em enough!

POLLY. What do you mean?

SAM. For the neighbours to talk about. Who's he after?

POLLY. What do you mean by after? You're forgetting yourself, I think.

SAM. No, I'm not forgetting myself — I'm remembering you. What can a long fool of a swell dressed up to the nines within an inch of his life want with two girls of your class? Look at the difference of your stations! 'E don't come 'ere after any good.

[*During the speech,* ESTHER *crosses to fire and sits before it in a low chair.* GEORGE *follows her and sits on her left*]

POLLY. Samuel!

SAM. I mean what I say. People should stick to their own class. Life's a railway journey, and Mankind's a passenger — first class, second class, third class. Any person found riding in a superior class to that for which he has taken his ticket will be removed at the first station stopped at, according to the bye-laws of the company.

POLLY. You're giving yourself nice airs! What business is it of yours who comes here? Who are you?

SAM. I'm a mechanic.

POLLY. That's evident.

SAM. I ain't ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of my paper cap.

POLLY. Why should you be? I daresay Captain Hawtree isn't ashamed of his fourteen-and-sixpenny gossamer.

SAM. You think a deal of him 'cos he's a captain. Why did he call you "my lady"?

POLLY. Because he treated me as one. I wish you'd make the same mistake.

SAM. Ugh!

[SAM *goes angrily to bureau.* POLLY *bounces up stage, and sits in window seat*]

ESTHER [*sitting with* GEORGE, *tête-à-tête, by fire*]. But we must listen to reason.

GEORGE. I hate reason!

ESTHER. I wonder what it means?

GEORGE. Everything disagreeable. When people talk unpleasantly, they always say listen to reason.

SAM [*turning round*]. What will the neighbours say?

POLLY. I don't care! [*Coming down*]

SAM. What will the neighbours *think?*

POLLY. They can't think. They're like you, they've not been educated up to it.

SAM. It all comes of your being on the stage. [*Going to* POLLY]

POLLY. It all comes of your not understanding the stage or anything else — but putty. Now, if you were a gentleman —

SAM. Why then, of course, I should make up to a lady.

POLLY. Ugh!

[POLLY *flings herself into chair by table*]

GEORGE. Reason's an idiot. Two and two are four, and twelve are fifteen, and eight are twenty. That's reason!

SAM [*turning to* POLLY]. Painting your cheeks!

POLLY [*rising*]. Better paint our *cheeks* than paint *nasty old doors* as you do. How can you understand art? You're only a mechanic! You're not a professional! You're in trade. You are not of the same station as we are. When the manager speaks to you, you touch your hat, and say, "Yes, sir," because he's your superior.

[*Snaps fingers under* SAM'S *nose*]

GEORGE. When people love there's no such thing as money — it don't exist.

ESTHER. Yes, it does.

George. Then it oughtn't to.

Sam. The manager employs me same as he does you. Payment is good anywhere and everywhere. Whatever's commercial, is right.

Polly. Actors are not like mechanics. They wear cloth coats, and not fustian jackets.

Sam [*sneeringly in* Polly's *face*]. I despise play actors.

Polly. I despise mechanics.

[Polly *slaps his face*]

George. I never think of anything else but you.

Esther. Really?

Sam [*goes to bureau, misses cap, looks around, sees it on floor, picks it up angrily, and comes to* Polly, *who is sitting by the table*]. I won't stay here to be insulted. [*Putting on cap*]

Polly. Nobody wants you to stay. Go! Go! Go!

Sam. I will go. Good-bye, Miss Mary Eccles. [*Goes off and returns quickly*] I sha'n't come here again!

[*At door half-open*]

Polly. Don't! Good riddance to bad rubbish.

Sam [*rushing down stage to* Polly]. You can go to your *captain!*

Polly. And you to your *putty.*

[Sam *throws his cap down and kicks it — then goes up stage and picks it up.* Polly *turns and rises, leaning against table, facing him, crosses to door, and locks it.* Sam, *hearing click of lock, turns quickly*]

Esther. And shall you always love me as you do now?

George. More.

Polly. Now you *sha'n't* go. [*Locking door, taking out key, which she pockets, and placing her back against door*] Nyer! Now I'll just show you my power. Nyer!

Sam. *Miss Mary* Eccles, let me out!

[*Advancing to door*]

Polly. *Mr.* Samuel Gerridge, I sha'n't! [Sam *turns away*]

Esther. Now you two. [*Postman's knock*] The postman!

Sam. Now you must let me out. You must unlock the door.

Polly. No, I needn't. [*Opens window, looking out*] Here — postman. [*Takes letter from postman at window*] Thank you. [*Business; flicks* Sam *in the face with letter*] For you. Esther!

Esther [*rising*]. For me?

Polly. Yes.

[*Gives it to her, and closes window, and returns to door triumphantly.* Sam *goes to window*]

Esther [*going down*]. From Manchester!

George. Manchester?

[*Coming down back of* Esther]

Esther [*reading*]. I've got the engagement — four pounds a week.

George [*placing his arm around her*]. You sha'n't go. Esther — stay — be my wife!

Esther. But the world — your world?

George. Hang the world! You're my world. Stay with your husband, *Mrs. George D'Alroy.*

[*During this* Polly *has been dancing up and down in front of the door*]

Sam. I *will* go out.

[*Turning with sudden determination*]

Polly. You can't, and you sha'n't!

Sam. I can — I will!

[*Opens window and jumps out*]

Polly [*frightened*]. He's hurt himself. Sam — Sam, — dear Sam!

[*Running to window.* Sam *appears at window.* Polly *slaps his face and shuts window down violently*]

Nyer!

[*During this* George *has kissed* Esther]

George. My wife!

[*The handle of the door is heard to rattle, then the door is shaken violently.* Esther *crosses to door; finding it locked, turns to* Polly *sitting in window seat, who gives her the key.* Esther *then opens the door.* Eccles *reels in, very drunk, and clings to the corner of the bureau for support.* George *stands pulling his moustache.* Esther, *a little way up, looking with shame first at her father, then at* George. Polly *sitting in window recess*]

ACT DROP

For call. — George, *hat in hand, bidding* Esther *good-bye.* Eccles *sitting in chair, nodding before fire.* Sam *again looks in at window.* Polly *pulls the blind down violently.*

ACT II

SCENE FIRST. — D'ALROY'S *lodgings in Mayfair. A set chamber. Folding-doors opening on to drawing-room. Door on the right. Two windows, with muslin curtains. Loo-table. Sofa above piano. Two easy-chairs, on each side of table. Dessert — claret in jug; two wine-glasses half full. Box of cigarettes, vase of flowers, embroidered slipper on canvas, and small basket of coloured wools, all on table. Foot-stool by easy-chair. Ornamental gilt work-basket on stand in window. Easy-chair. Piano. Mahogany-stained easel with oil-painting of* D'ALROY *in full dragoon regimentals. Davenport with vase of flowers on it; a chair on each side; a water-colour drawing over it, and on each side of room. Half moonlight through window.* ESTHER *and* GEORGE *discovered.* ESTHER *at window. When curtain has risen she comes down slowly to chair right of table, and* GEORGE *sitting in easy-chair left of table.* GEORGE *has his uniform trousers and spurs on.*

ESTHER. George, dear, you seem out of spirits.

GEORGE [*smoking cigarette*]. Not at all, dear, not at all. [*Rallying*]

ESTHER. Then why don't you talk?

GEORGE. I've nothing to say.

ESTHER. That's no reason.

GEORGE. I can't talk about nothing.

ESTHER. Yes, you can; you often do. [*Crossing round back of table and caressing him*] You used to do before we were married.

GEORGE. No, I didn't. I talked about you, and my love for you. D'ye call that nothing?

ESTHER [*sitting on stool left of* GEORGE]. How long have we been married, dear? Let me see; six months yesterday. [*Dreamily*] It hardly seems a week; it almost seems a dream.

GEORGE [*putting his arm around her*]. Awfully jolly dream. Don't let us wake up. [*Aside and recovering himself*] How ever shall I tell her?

ESTHER. And when I married you I was twenty-two, wasn't I?

GEORGE. Yes, dear; but then, you know, you must have been some age or other.

ESTHER. No; but to think I lived two and twenty years without knowing you!

GEORGE. What of it, dear?

ESTHER. It seems such a dreadful waste of time.

GEORGE. So it was — awful.

ESTHER. Do you remember our first meeting? Then I was in the ballet.

GEORGE. Yes; now you're in the heavies.

ESTHER. Then I was in the front rank — now I am of high rank — the Honourable Mrs. George D'Alroy. You promoted me to be your wife.

GEORGE. No, dear, you promoted me to be your husband.

ESTHER. And now I'm one of the aristocracy; ain't I?

GEORGE. Yes, dear; I suppose that we may consider ourselves —

ESTHER. Tell me, George; are you quite sure that you are proud of your poor little humble wife?

GEORGE. Proud of you! Proud as the winner of the Derby.

ESTHER. Wouldn't you have loved me better if I'd been a lady?

GEORGE. You *are* a lady — you're my wife.

ESTHER. What will your mamma say when she knows of our marriage? I quite tremble at the thought of meeting her.

GEORGE. So do I. Luckily she's in Rome.

ESTHER. Do you know, George, I should like to be married all over again.

GEORGE. Not to anybody else, I hope?

ESTHER. My darling!

GEORGE. But why over again? Why?

ESTHER. Our courtship was so beautiful. It was like in a novel from the library, only better. You, a fine, rich, high-born gentleman, coming to our humble little house to court poor me. Do you remember the ballet you first saw me in? That was at Covent Garden. "Jeanne la Folle; or, the Return of the Soldier." [*Goes up to piano*] Don't you remember the dance?

[*Plays a quick movement*]

GEORGE. Esther, how came you to learn to play the piano? Did you teach yourself?

ESTHER. Yes. [*Turning on music-stool*] So did Polly. We can only just touch the notes to amuse ourselves.

GEORGE. How was it?

ESTHER. I've told you so often.

[*Rises and sits on stool at* GEORGE'S *feet*]

GEORGE. Tell me again. I'm like the children — I like to hear what I know already.

ESTHER. Well, then, mother died when I was quite young. I can only just remember her. Polly was an infant; so I had to be Polly's mother. Father — who is a very eccentric man [GEORGE *sighs deeply* — ESTHER *notices it and goes on rapidly — all to be simultaneous in action*] but a very good one when you know him — did not take much notice of us, and we got on as we could. We used to let the first floor, and a lodger took it — Herr Griffenhaagen. He was a ballet master at the Opera. He took a fancy to me, and asked me if I should like to learn to dance, and I told him father couldn't afford to pay for my tuition; and he said that [*imitation*] he did not vant bayment, but dat he would teach me for noding, for he had taken a fancy to me, because I was like a leetle lady he had known long years ago in de far off land he came from. Then he got us an engagement at the theatre. That was how we first were in the ballet.

GEORGE [*slapping his leg*]. That fellow was a great brick; I should like to ask him to dinner. What became of him?

ESTHER. I don't know. He left England. [GEORGE *fidgets and looks at watch*] You are restless, George. What's the matter?

GEORGE. Nothing.

ESTHER. Are you going out?

GEORGE. Yes. [*Looking at his boots and spurs*] That's the reason I dined in —

ESTHER. To the barracks?

GEORGE. Yes.

ESTHER. On duty?

GEORGE [*hesitatingly*]. On duty. [*Rising*] And, of course, when a man is a soldier, he must go on duty when he's ordered, and where he's ordered — and — [*Aside*] — why did I ever enter the service? [*Crosses*]

ESTHER [*rises, crosses to* GEORGE — *and twining her arm round him*]. George, if you must go out to your club, go; don't mind leaving me. Somehow or other, George, these last few days everything seems to have changed with me — I don't know why. Sometimes my eyes fill with tears, for no reason, and sometimes I feel so happy, for no reason. I don't mind being left by myself as I used to do. When you are a few minutes behind time I don't run to the window and watch for you, and turn irritable. Not that I love you less — no, for I love you more; but often when you are away I don't feel that I am by myself. [*Dropping her head on his breast*] I never feel alone.

[*Goes to piano and turns over music*]

GEORGE [*watching* ESTHER]. What angels women are! At least, this one is. I forget all about the others. [*Carriage-wheels heard off*] If I'd known I could have been so happy, I'd have sold out when I married.

[*Knock at street door*]

ESTHER [*standing at table*]. That for us, dear?

GEORGE [*at first window*]. Hawtree in a hansom. He's come for — [*Aside*] — me. I *must* tell her sooner or later. [*At door*] Come in, Hawtree.

[*Enter* HAWTREE, *in regimentals*]

HAWTREE. How do? Hope you're well, Mrs. D'Alroy? [*Coming down*] George, are you coming to —

GEORGE [*coming down left of* HAWTREE]. No, I've dined — [*gives a significant look*] — we dined early.

[ESTHER *plays scraps of music at piano*]

HAWTREE [*sotto voce*]. Haven't you told her?

GEORGE. No, I daren't.

HAWTREE. But you must.

GEORGE. You know what an awful coward I am. You do it for me.

HAWTREE. Not for worlds. I've just had my own adieux to make.

GEORGE. Ah, yes, — to Florence Carberry. How did she take it?

HAWTREE. Oh, [*slight pause*] very well.

GEORGE [*earnestly*]. Did she cry?

HAWTREE. No.

GEORGE. Nor exhibit any emotion whatever?

HAWTREE. No, not particularly.

GEORGE [*surprisedly*]. Didn't you kiss her?

HAWTREE. No; Lady Clardonax was in the room.

GEORGE [*wonderingly*]. Didn't she squeeze your hand?

HAWTREE. No.

GEORGE [*impressively*]. Didn't she say anything?

HAWTREE. No, except that she

hoped to see me back again soon, and that India was a bad climate.

GEORGE. Umph! It seems to have been a tragic parting [*serio-comically*] — almost as tragic as parting — your back hair.

HAWTREE. Lady Florence is not the sort of person to make a scene.

GEORGE. To be sure, she's not your wife. I wish Esther would be as cool and comfortable. [*After a pause*] No, I don't, — no, I don't. [*A rap at door*]

[*Enter* DIXON]

GEORGE [*goes up to* DIXON]. Oh, Dixon, lay out my —

DIXON. I have laid them out, sir; everything is ready.

GEORGE [*going down to* HAWTREE — *after a pause* — *irresolutely*]. I must tell her — mustn't I?

HAWTREE. Better send for her sister. Let Dixon go for her in a cab.

GEORGE. Just so. I'll send him at once. Dixon!

[*Goes up and talks to* DIXON]

ESTHER [*rising and going to back of chair, left of table*]. Do you want to have a talk with my husband? Shall I go into the dining-room?

HAWTREE. No, Mrs. D'Alroy.

[*Going to table and placing cap on it*]

GEORGE. No, dear. At once, Dixon. Tell the cabman to drive like — [*exit* DIXON] — like a — cornet just joined.

ESTHER. [*To* HAWTREE] Are you going to take him anywhere?

HAWTREE [GEORGE *comes down and touches* HAWTREE *quickly on the shoulder before he can speak*]. No. [*Aside*] Yes — to India. [*Crossing to* GEORGE] Tell her now.

GEORGE. No, no. I'll wait till I put on my uniform. [*Going up*]

[*Door opens and* POLLY *peeps in*]

POLLY. How d'ye do, good people, — quite well?

[POLLY *gets back of table — kisses* ESTHER]

GEORGE. Eh? Didn't you meet Dixon?

POLLY. Who?

GEORGE. Dixon — my man.

POLLY. No.

GEORGE. Confound it! — he'll have his ride for nothing. How d'ye do, Polly? [*Shakes hands*]

POLLY. How d'ye do, George.

[ESTHER *takes* POLLY'S *things and goes up stage with them.* POLLY *places parasol on table.* ESTHER *returns left of* POLLY]

POLLY. Bless you, my turtles. [*Blessing them, ballet fashion*] George, kiss your mother. [*He kisses her*] That's what I call an honourable brother-in-law's kiss. I'm not in the way, am I?

GEORGE [*behind easy-chair right of table*]. Not at all. I'm very glad you've come.

[ESTHER *shows* POLLY *the new music.* POLLY *sits at piano and plays comic tune*]

HAWTREE [*back to audience, and elbow on easy-chair, aside to* GEORGE]. Under ordinary circumstances she's not a very eligible visitor.

GEORGE. Caste again. [*Going up*] I'll be back directly. [*Exit* GEORGE]

HAWTREE [*looking at watch and crossing*]. Mrs. D'Alroy, I —

ESTHER [*who is standing over* POLLY *at piano*]. Going?

POLLY [*rising*]. Do I drive you away, Captain?

[*Taking her parasol from table.* ESTHER *gets to back of chair left of table*]

HAWTREE. No.

POLLY. Yes, I do. I frighten you, I'm so ugly. I know I do. You frighten me.

HAWTREE. How so?

POLLY. You're so handsome. [*Coming down*] Particularly in those clothes, for all the world like an inspector of police.

ESTHER. [*Half aside*] Polly!

POLLY. I will! I like to take him down a bit.

HAWTREE. [*Aside*] This is rather a wild sort of thing in sisters-in-law.

POLLY. Any news, Captain?

HAWTREE [*in a drawling tone*]. No. Is there any news with you?

POLLY [*imitating him*]. Yaas; we've got a new piece coming out at our theatre.

HAWTREE [*interested*]. What's it about?

POLLY [*drawling*]. I don't know. [*To* ESTHER] Had him there! [HAWTREE *drops his sword from his arm;* POLLY *turns round quickly, hearing the noise, and pretends to be frightened*] Going to kill anybody to-day, that you've got your sword on?

HAWTREE. No.

POLLY. I thought not.

[*Sings*] "With a sabre on his brow,
And a helmet by his side,

The soldier sweethearts servant-maids,
And eats cold meat besides."

[*Laughs and walks about waving her parasol*]

[*Enter* GEORGE *in uniform, carrying in his hand his sword, sword-belt, and cap.* ESTHER *takes them from him, and places them on sofa, then comes half down.* GEORGE *goes down by* HAWTREE]

POLLY [*clapping her hands*]. Oh! here's a beautiful brother-in-law! Why didn't you come in on horseback as they do at Astley's? — gallop in and say [*Imitating soldier on horseback and prancing up and down stage during the piece*], Soldiers of France! the eyes of Europe are a-looking at you! The Empire has confidence in you, and France expects that every man this day will do his — little utmost! The foe is before you — more's the pity — and you are before them — worse luck for you! Forward! Go and get killed; and to those who escape the Emperor will give a little bit of ribbon! Nineteens, about! Forward! Gallop! Charge!

[*Galloping to right, imitating bugle, and giving point with parasol. She nearly spears* HAWTREE'S *nose.* HAWTREE *claps his hand upon his sword-hilt. She throws herself into chair, laughing, and clapping* HAWTREE'S *cap (from table) upon her head. All laugh and applaud. Carriage-wheels heard without*]

POLLY. Oh, what a funny little cap, it's got no peak. [*A peal of knocks heard at street door*] What's that?

GEORGE [*who has hastened to window*]. A carriage! Good heavens — my mother!

HAWTREE. [*At window*] The Marchioness!

ESTHER [*crossing to* GEORGE]. Oh, George!

POLLY [*crossing to window*]. A Marchioness! A real, live Marchioness! Let me look! I never saw a real live Marchioness in all my life.

GEORGE [*forcing her from window*]. No, no, no! She doesn't know I'm married. I must break it to her by degrees. What shall I do?

[*By this time* HAWTREE *is at door right.* ESTHER *at door left*]

ESTHER. Let me go into the bedroom until —

HAWTREE. Too late! She's on the stairs.

ESTHER. Here, then!

[*At centre doors, opens them*]

POLLY. I want to see a real, live March—

[GEORGE *lifts her in his arms and places her within folding-doors with* ESTHER — *then shutting doors quickly, turns and faces* HAWTREE, *who, gathering up his sword, faces* GEORGE. *They then exchange places much in the fashion of soldiers "mounting guard." As* GEORGE *opens door and admits* MARCHIONESS, HAWTREE *drops down to left*]

GEORGE [*with great ceremony*]. My dear mother, I saw you getting out of the carriage.

MARCHIONESS. My dear boy. [*Kissing his forehead*] I'm so glad I got to London before you embarked. [GEORGE *nervous.* HAWTREE *coming down*] Captain Hawtree, I think. How do you do?

HAWTREE [*coming forward a little*]. Quite well, I thank your ladyship. I trust you are —

MARCHIONESS [*sitting in easy-chair*]. Oh, quite, thanks. [*Slight pause*] Do you still see the Countess and Lady Florence?

[*Looking at him through her glasses*]

HAWTREE. Yes.

MARCHIONESS. Please remember me to them — [HAWTREE *takes cap from table, and places sword under his arm*] Are you going?

HAWTREE. Yaas — Compelled. [*Bows, crossing round back of table. To* GEORGE *who meets him*] I'll be at the door for you at seven. We must be at barracks by the quarter. [GEORGE *crosses back of table*] Poor devil! This comes of a man marrying beneath him.

[*Exit* HAWTREE. GEORGE *comes down left of table*]

MARCHIONESS. I'm not sorry that he's gone, for I wanted to talk to you alone. Strange that a woman of such good birth as the Countess should encourage the attention of Captain Hawtree for her daughter Florence. [*During these lines* D'ALROY *conceals* POLLY'S *hat and umbrella under table*] Lady Clardonax was one of the old Carberrys of Hampshire — not the Norfolk Carberrys, but the direct line. And Mr. Hawtree's grandfather was in trade — something in the City — soap, I think.

Stool, George! [*Points to stool.* George *brings it to her. She motions that he is to sit at her feet.* George *does so with a sigh*] He's a very nice person, but parvenu, as one may see by his languor and his swagger. My boy [*kissing his forehead*], I am sure, will never make a mésalliance. He is a D'Alroy, and by his mother's side Planta-genista. The source of our life stream is royal.

George. How is the Marquis?

Marchioness. Paralysed. I left him at Spa with three physicians. He is always paralysed at this time of the year; it is in the family. The paralysis is not personal, but hereditary. I came over to see my steward; got to town last night.

George. How did you find me out here?

Marchioness. I sent the footman to the barracks, and he saw your man Dixon in the street, and Dixon gave him this address It's so long since I've seen you. [*Leans back in chair*] You're looking very well, and I daresay when mounted are quite a "beau cavalier." And so, my boy [*playing with his hair*], you are going abroad for the first time on active service.

George. [*Aside*] Every word can be heard in the next room. If they've only gone upstairs.

Marchioness. And now, my dear boy, before you go I want to give you some advice; and you mustn't despise it because I'm an old woman. We old women know a great deal more than people give us credit for. You are a soldier — so was your father — so was his father — so was mine — so was our royal founder; we were born to lead! The common people expect it from us. It is our duty. Do you not remember in the Chronicles of Froissart? [*With great enjoyment*] I think I can quote it word for word; I've a wonderful memory for my age. [*With closed eyes*] It was in the fifty-ninth chapter — "How Godefroy D'Alroy helde the towne of St. Amande duryng the siege before Tournay." It said "the towne was not closed but with pales, and captayne there was Sir Amory of Pauy — the Seneschall of Carcassoune — who had said it was not able to hold agaynste an hooste, when one Godefroy D'Alroy sayd that rather than he woulde depart, he woulde keepe it to the best of his power. Whereat the souldiers cheered and sayd, 'Lead us on, Sir Godefroy.' And then began a fierce assault; and they within were chased, and sought for shelter from street to street. But Godefroy stood at the gate so valyantly that the souldiers helde the towne until the commyng of the Earl of Haynault with twelve thousande men."

George. [*Aside*] I wish she'd go. If she once gets onto Froissart, she'll never know when to stop.

Marchioness. When my boy fights — and you will fight — he is sure to distinguish himself. It is his nature to — [*toys with his hair*] — he cannot forget his birth. And when you meet these Asiatic ruffians, who have dared to revolt, and to outrage humanity, you will strike as your ancestor Sir Galtier of Chevrault struck at Poictiers. [*Changing tone of voice as if remembering*] Froissart mentions it thus: — "Sir Galtier, with his four squires, was in the front, in that battell, and there did marvels in arms. And Sir Galtier rode up to the Prince, and sayd to him — 'Sir, take your horse and ryde forth, this journey is yours. God is this daye in your handes. Gette us to the French Kynge's batayle. I think verily by his valyantesse, he woll not fly. Advance banner in the name of God and of Saynt George!' And Sir Galtier galloped forward to see his Kynge's victory, and meet his own death."

George. [*Aside*] If Esther hears all this!

Marchioness. There is another subject about which I should have spoken to you before this; but an absurd prudery forbade me. I may never see you more. I am old — and you — are going into battle — [*kissing his forehead with emotion*] — and this may be our last meeting. [*Noise heard within folding-doors*] What's that?

George. Nothing — my man Dixon in there.

Marchioness. We may not meet again on this earth. I do not fear your conduct, my George, with men; but I know the temptations that beset a youth who is well born. But a true soldier, a true gentleman, should not only be without fear, but without reproach. It is easier to fight a furious man than to forego the conquest of a love-sick girl. A thousand Sepoys slain in battle cannot redeem the honour of a man who has betrayed the confidence of a trusting woman. Think, George, what dishonour — what stain upon

your manhood — to hurl a girl to shame and degradation! And what excuse for it? That she is plebeian? A man of real honour will spare the woman who has confessed her love for him as he would give quarter to an enemy he had disarmed. [*Taking his hands*] Let my boy avoid the snares so artfully spread; and when he asks his mother to welcome the woman he has chosen for his wife, let me take her to my arms and plant a motherly kiss upon the white brow of a lady. [*Noise of a fall heard within folding-doors. Rising.*] What's that?

GEORGE [*rising*]. Nothing.

MARCHIONESS. I heard a cry.

[*Folding-doors open; discovering* ESTHER *with* POLLY, *staggering in, fainting*]

POLLY. George! George!

[GEORGE *goes up and* ESTHER *falls in his arms.* GEORGE *places* ESTHER *on sofa.* GEORGE *on her right,* POLLY *on her left*]

MARCHIONESS [*coming down*]. Who are these *women?*

POLLY. Women!

MARCHIONESS. George D'Alroy, these persons should have been sent away. How could you dare to risk your mother meeting women of their stamp?

POLLY [*violently*]. What does she mean? How dare she call me a woman? What's she, I'd like to know?

GEORGE. Silence, Polly! You mustn't insult my mother.

MARCHIONESS. The insult is from you. I leave you, and I hope that time may induce me to forget this scene of degradation. [*Turning to go*]

GEORGE. Stay, mother. [MARCHIONESS *turns slightly away*] Before you go [GEORGE *has raised* ESTHER *from sofa in his arms*] let me present to you Mrs. George D'Alroy. *My wife!*

MARCHIONESS. Married!

GEORGE. Married.

[MARCHIONESS *sinks into easy-chair;* GEORGE *replaces* ESTHER *on sofa, but still retains her hand. Three hesitating taps at door heard.* GEORGE *crosses to door, opens it, discovers* ECCLES, *who enters.* GEORGE *drops down back of* MARCHIONESS'S *chair*]

ECCLES. They told us to come up. When your man came Polly was out; so I thought I should do instead. [*Calling at door*] Come up, Sam.

[*Enter* SAM *in his Sunday clothes, with short cane and smoking a cheroot. He nods and grins* — POLLY *points to* MARCHIONESS — SAM *takes cheroot from his mouth and quickly removes his hat*]

ECCLES. Sam had just called; so we three — Sam and I, and your man, all came in the 'ansom cab together. Didn't we, Sam.

[ECCLES *and* SAM *go over to the girls, and* ECCLES *drops down to front of table — smilingly.*

MARCHIONESS [*with glasses up, to* GEORGE]. Who is this?

GEORGE [*coming left of* MARCHIONESS]. My wife's father.

MARCHIONESS. What is he?

GEORGE. A — nothing.

ECCLES. I am one of nature's noblemen. Happy to see you, my lady — [*turning to her*] — now, my daughters have told me who you are — [GEORGE *turns his back in an agony as* ECCLES *crosses to* MARCHIONESS] — we old folks, fathers and mothers of the young couples, ought to make friends.

[*Holding out his dirty hand*]

MARCHIONESS [*shrinking back*]. Go away! [ECCLES *goes back to table again, disgusted*] What's his name?

GEORGE. Eccles.

MARCHIONESS. Eccles! Eccles! There never was an Eccles. He don't exist.

ECCLES. Don't he, though? What d'ye call this?

[*Goes up again to back of table as* SAM *drops down. He is just going to take a decanter when* SAM *stops him*]

MARCHIONESS. No Eccles was ever born!

GEORGE. He takes the liberty of breathing notwithstanding. [*Aside*] And I wish he wouldn't.

MARCHIONESS. And who is the little man? Is he also Eccles?

[SAM *looks round.* POLLY *gets close up to him, and looks with defiant glance at the* MARCHIONESS]

GEORGE. No.

MARCHIONESS. Thank goodness! What then?

GEORGE. His name is Gerridge.

MARCHIONESS. *Gerridge!* It breaks one's teeth. Why is he here?

GEORGE. He is making love to Polly, my wife's sister.

MARCHIONESS. And what is he?

GEORGE. A gasman.

MARCHIONESS. He looks it. [GEORGE *goes up to* ESTHER] And what is she — the — the sister?

[ECCLES, *who has been casting longing eyes at the decanter on table, edges towards it, and when he thinks no one is noticing, fills wine-glass*]

POLLY [*asserting herself indignantly*]. I'm in the ballet at the Theatre Royal, Lambeth. So was Esther. We're not ashamed of what we are. We have no cause to be.

SAM. That's right, Polly! pitch into them swells! — who are they?

[ECCLES *by this time has seized wine-glass, and turning his back, is about to drink, when* HAWTREE *enters.* ECCLES *hides glass under his coat, and pretends to be looking up at picture*]

HAWTREE [*entering*]. George! [*Stops suddenly, looking round*] So, all's known!

MARCHIONESS [*rising*]. Captain Hawtree, see me to my carriage; I am broken-hearted.

[*Takes* HAWTREE'S *arm and is going up*]

ECCLES [*who has tasted the claret, spits it out with a grimace, exclaiming*]. Rot!

[POLLY *goes to piano — sits on stool —* SAM, *back to audience, leaning on piano.* ECCLES *exits through folding-doors*]

GEORGE. [*To* MARCHIONESS] Don't go in anger. You may not see me again.

[ESTHER *rises in nervous excitement, clutching* GEORGE'S *hand.* MARCHIONESS *stops.* ESTHER *brings* GEORGE *down*]

ESTHER [*with arm round his neck*]. Oh, George! must you go?

[*They come to front of table*]

GEORGE. Yes.

ESTHER. I can't leave you. I'll go with you!

GEORGE. Impossible! The country is too unsettled.

ESTHER. May I come after you?

GEORGE. Yes.

ESTHER [*with her head on his shoulder*]. I may.

MARCHIONESS [*coming down,* HAWTREE *at door*]. It is his duty to go. His honour calls him. The honour of his family — *our* honour.

ESTHER. But I love him so! Pray don't be angry with me!

HAWTREE [*looking at watch and coming down*]. George!

GEORGE. I must go, love.

[HAWTREE *goes up to door again*]

MARCHIONESS [*advancing*]. Let me arm you, George — let your mother, as in the days of old. There is blood — and blood, my son. See, your wife cries when she should be proud of you!

GEORGE. My Esther is all that is good and noble. No lady born to a coronet could be gentler or more true. Esther, my wife, fetch me my sword, and buckle my belt around me.

ESTHER [*clinging to him*]. No, no; I can't!

GEORGE. Try. [*Whispers to* ESTHER] To please my mother. [*To* MARCHIONESS] You shall see. [ESTHER *totters up stage,* POLLY *assisting her, and brings down his sword. As* ESTHER *is trying to buckle his belt, he whispers*] I've left money for you, my darling. My lawyer will call on you to-morrow. Forgive me! I tried hard to tell you we were ordered for India; but when the time came, my heart failed me, and I —

[ESTHER, *before she can succeed in fastening his sword-belt, reels, and falls fainting in his arms.* POLLY *hurries to her.* SAM *standing at piano, looking frightened;* HAWTREE *with hand upon handle of door;* MARCHIONESS *looking on, at right of* GEORGE]

ACT DROP

[*For call —* GEORGE *and* HAWTREE *gone.* ESTHER *in chair fainting;* POLLY *and* SAM *each side of her,* POLLY *holding her hands, and* SAM *fanning her with his red handkerchief. The folding-doors thrown open, and* ECCLES *standing at back of table offering glass of claret*]

ACT III

SCENE. — *The room in Stangate (as in Act I). Same furniture as in Act I, with exception of piano, with roll of music tied up on it, in place of bureau. Map of India over mantlepiece. Sword with crape knot, spurs,*

and cap, craped, hanging over chimney-piece. Portrait of D'ALROY *(large) on mantel-piece. Berceaunette, and child, with coral, in it.* POLLY'S *bonnet and shawl hanging on peg. Small tin saucepan in fender, fire alight, and kettle on it. Two candles (tallow) in sticks, one of which is broken about three inches from the top and hangs over. Slate and pencil on table. Jug on table, bandbox and ballet skirt on table. At rise of curtain* POLLY *discovered at table, back of stage. Comes down and places skirt in bandbox. She is dressed in black.*

POLLY [*placing skirt in box, and leaning her chin upon her hand*]. There — there's the dress for poor Esther in case she gets the engagement, which I don't suppose she will. It's too good luck, and good luck never comes to her, poor thing. [*Goes up to back of cradle*] Baby's asleep still. How good he looks — as good as if he were dead, like his poor father; and alive too, at the same time, like his dear self. Ah! dear me; it's a strange world. [*Sits in chair right of table, feeling in pocket for money*] Four and elevenpence. That must do for to-day and to-morrow. Esther is going to bring in the rusks for Georgy. [*Takes up slate*] Three, five — eight, and four — twelve, one shilling — father can only have twopence. [*This all to be said in one breath*] He must make do with that till Saturday, when I get my salary. If Esther gets the engagement, I sha'n't have many more salaries to take; I shall leave the stage and retire into private life. I wonder if I shall like private life, and if private life will like me. It will seem so strange being no longer Miss Mary Eccles — but Mrs. Samuel Gerridge. [*Writes it on slate*] "Mrs. Samuel Gerridge." [*Laughs bashfully*] La! to think of my being Mrs. Anybody! How annoyed Susan Smith will be! [*Writing on slate*] "Mrs. Samuel Gerridge presents her compliments to Miss Susan Smith, and Mrs. Samuel Gerridge requests the favour of Miss Susan Smith's company to tea, on Tuesday evening next, at Mrs. Samuel Gerridge's house." [*Pause*] Poor Susan! [*Beginning again*] "P.S. — Mrs. Samuel Gerridge —"

[*Knock heard at room door;* POLLY *starts*]

SAM. [*Without*] Polly, open the door.

POLLY. Sam! come in.

SAM. [*Without*] I can't.

POLLY. Why not?

SAM. I've got somethin' on my 'ead.

[POLLY *rises and opens door.* SAM *enters, carrying two rolls of wall-paper, one in each hand, and a small table on his head, which he deposits down stage, then puts roll of paper on piano, as also his cap.* SAM *has a rule-pocket in corduroys*]

POLLY [*shuts door*]. What's that?

SAM [*pointing to table with pride*]. Furniture. How are you, my Polly? [*Kissing her*] You look handsomer than ever this morning. [*Dances and sings*]. "Tid-dle-di-tum-ti-di-do."

POLLY. What's the matter, Sam? Are you mad?

SAM. No, 'appy — much the same thing.

POLLY. Where have you been these two days?

SAM [*all excitement*]. That's just what I'm goin' to tell yer. Polly, my pet, my brightest batswing and most brilliant burner, what do yer think?

POLLY. Oh, do go on, Sam, or I'll slap your face.

SAM. Well, then, you've 'eard me speak of old Binks, the plumber, glazier, and gasfitter, who died six months ago?

POLLY. Yes.

SAM [*sternly and deliberately*]. I've bought 'is business.

POLLY. No!

SAM [*excitedly*]. Yes, of 'is widow, old Mrs. Binks — so much down, and so much more at the end of the year. [*Dances and sings*]

Ri-ti-toodle
Roodle-oodle
Ri-ti-tooral-lay.

POLLY. La, Sam.

SAM [*pacing stage up and down*]. Yes; I've bought the goodwill, fixtures, fittin's, stock, rolls of gas-pipe, and sheets of lead. [*Jumps on table, quickly facing* POLLY] Yes, Polly, I'm a tradesman with a shop — a master tradesman. [*Coming to* POLLY *seriously*] All I want to complete the premises is a missus.

[*Tries to kiss her. She pushes him away*]

POLLY. Sam, don't be foolish.

SAM [*arm round her waist*]. Come and

be Mrs. Sam Gerridge, Polly, my patent-safety-day-and-night-light. You'll furnish me completely.

[POLLY *goes up*, SAM *watching her admiringly; he then sees slate, snatches it up and looks at it. She snatches it from him with a shriek, and rubs out the writing, looking daggers at him*, SAM *laughing*]

SAM. Only to think now.

[*Putting arm round her waist.* POLLY *pouting*]

POLLY. Don't be a goose.

SAM [*going towards table*]. I spent the whole of yesterday lookin' up furniture. Now I bought that a bargain, and I brought it 'ere to show you for your approval. I've bought lots of other things, and I'll bring 'em all 'ere to show you for your approval.

POLLY. I couldn't think what had become of you. [*Seated right of table*]

SAM. Couldn't yer? Oh, I say, I want yer to choose the new paper for the little back-parlour just behind the shop, you know. Now what d'yer think of this?

[*Fetching a pattern from piano and unrolling it*]

POLLY. No, I don't like that. [SAM *fetches the other, a flaming pattern*] Ah! that's neat.

SAM. Yes, that's neat and quiet. I'll new-paper it, and new-furnish it, and it shall all be bran-new.

[*Puts paper on top of piano*]

POLLY. But won't it cost a lot of money?

SAM [*bravely*]. I can work for it. With customers in the shop, and you in the back-parlour, I can work like fifty men. [*Sits on table, beckons* POLLY *to him; she comes left of table*, SAM *puts his arm round* POLLY, *sentimentally*] Only fancy, at night, when the shop's closed, and the shutters are up, counting out the till together! [*Changing his manner*] Besides, that isn't all I've been doin'. I've been writin', and what I've written, I've got printed.

POLLY. No!

SAM. True.

POLLY. You've been writing — about me? [*Delighted*]

SAM. No — about the shop. [POLLY *disgusted*] Here it is. [*Takes roll of circulars from pocket of his canvas slop*] Yer mustn't laugh — yer know — it's my first attempt. I wrote it the night before last; and when I thought of you the words seemed to flow like — red-hot solder. [*Reads*] Hem! "Samuel Gerridge takes this opportunity of informin' the nobility, gentry, and inhabitants of the Borough-road —"

POLLY. The Borough-road?

SAM. Well, there ain't many of the nobility and gentry as lives in the Borough-road, but it pleases the inhabitants to make 'em believe yer think so [*resuming*] — "of informin' the nobility, gentry and inhabitants of the Borough-road, and its vicinity" — and "its vicinity." [*Looking at her*] Now I think that's rather good, eh?

POLLY. Yes. [*Doubtfully*] I've heard worse.

SAM. I first thought of saying neighbour'ood; but then vicinity sounds so much more genteel [*resuming*] — "*and* its vicinity, that 'e has entered upon the business of the late Mr. Binks, 'is relict, the present Mrs. B., 'avin' disposed to 'im of the same" — now listen, Polly, because it gets interestin' — "S. G. — "

POLLY. S. G. Who's he?

SAM [*looking at* POLLY *with surprise*]. Why, me. S. G. — Samuel Gerridge — me, us. We're S. G. Now don't interrupt me, or you'll cool my metal, and then I can't work. "S. G. 'opes that, by a constant attention to business, and" — mark this — "by supplyin' the best articles at the most reasonable prices, to merit a continuance of those favours which it will ever be 'is constant study to deserve." There! [*Turning on table triumphantly*] Stop a bit, — there's a little bit more yet. "Bell-'angin', gas-fittin', plumbin', and glazin', as usual." There! and it's all my own!

[*Puts circular on mantel-piece, and crossing contemplates it*]

POLLY. Beautiful, Sam. It looks very attractive from here, don't it?

SAM. [*Postman's knock*] There's the postman. I'll go. I shall send some of these out by post.

[*Goes off and returns with letter*]

POLLY [*taking it*]. Oh, for Esther. I know who it's from. [*Places letter on mantel-piece. At chair left of table.* SAM *sits corner of table, reading circular. Seriously*] Sam, who do you think was here last night?

SAM. Who?

POLLY. Captain Hawtree.

SAM [*deprecatingly*]. Oh, 'im! — Come back from India, I suppose.

POLLY. Yes, — luckily Esther was out.

SAM. I never liked that long swell. He was a 'uppish, conceited —

POLLY [*sitting at end of table*]. Oh, he's better than he used to be — he's a major now. He's only been in England a fortnight.

SAM. Did he tell yer anything about De Alroy?

POLLY [*leaning against table end*]. Yes; he said he was riding out not far from the cantonment, and was surrounded by a troop of Sepoy cavalry, which took him prisoner, and galloped off with him.

SAM. But about 'is death?

POLLY. Oh! [*hiding her face*] that he said was believed to be too terrible to mention.

SAM [*crossing to* POLLY *at table*]. Did 'e tell yer anything else?

POLLY. No; he asked a lot of questions, and I told him everything. How poor Esther had taken her widowhood and what a dear good baby the baby was, and what a comfort to us all, and how Esther had come back to live with us again.

SAM [*sharply*]. And the reason for it?

POLLY [*looking down*]. Yes.

SAM. How your father got all the money that 'e'd left for Esther?

POLLY [*sharply*]. Don't say any more about that, Sam.

SAM. Oh! I only think Captain 'Awtree ought to know where the money *did* go to, and you shouldn't try and screen your father, and let 'im suppose that you and Esther spent it all.

POLLY. I told him — I told him — I told him. [*Angrily*]

SAM. Did you tell 'im that your father was always at 'armonic meetin's at taverns, and 'ad 'arf cracked 'isself with drink, and was always singin' the songs and makin' the speeches 'e 'eard there, and was always goin' on about 'is wrongs as one of the workin' classes? 'E's a pretty one for one of the workin' classes, 'e is! 'Asn't done a stroke of work these twenty year. Now, I *am* one of the workin' classes, but I *don't* 'owl about it. I work, I don't spout.

POLLY. Hold your tongue, Sam. I won't have you say any more against poor father. He has his faults, but he's a very clever man. [*Sighing*]

SAM. Ah! What else did Captain Hawtree say?

POLLY. He advised us to apply to Mr. D'Alroy's mother.

SAM. What! the Marquissy? And what did you say to that?

POLLY. I said that Esther wouldn't hear of it. And so the Major said that he'd write to Esther, and I suppose this is the letter.

SAM. Now, Polly, come along and choose the paper for the little back-parlour.

[*Going to table and taking it up to wall behind door*]

POLLY [*rising*]. Can't. Who's to mind baby?

SAM. The *baby?* Oh, I forgot all about 'im. [*Goes to cradle*] I see yer! [*Goes to window casually*] There's your father comin' down the street. Won't 'e mind 'im?

POLLY [*going up*]. I daresay he will. If I promise him an extra sixpence on Saturday. [SAM *opens window*] Hi! Father! [POLLY *goes to cradle*]

SAM. [*Aside*] 'E looks down in the mouth, 'e does. I suppose 'e's 'ad no drink this morning. [*Goes to* POLLY]

[*Enter* ECCLES *in shabby black. Pauses on entering, looks at* SAM, *turns away in disgust, takes off hat, places it on piano, and shambles across stage. Taking chair, places it, and sits before fire*]

POLLY [*goes to* ECCLES]. Come in to stop a bit, father?

ECCLES. No; not for long. [SAM *comes down*] Good morning, Samuel. Going back to work? that's right, my boy, — stick to it. [*Pokes fire*] Stick to it — nothing like it.

SAM. [*Aside*] Now, isn't that too bad? No, Mr. Eccles. I've knocked off for the day.

ECCLES [*waving poker*]. That's bad, — that's very bad! Nothing like work — for the young. I don't work so much as I used to, myself, but I like to [POLLY *sitting on corner of table up left*] see the young 'uns at it. It does me good, and it does them good, too. What does the poet say?

[*Rising, impressively, and leaning on table*]

"A carpenter said tho' that was well spoke,
It was better by far to defend it with hoak.
A currier, wiser than both put together,
Said say what you will, there is nothing like *labour*.
For a' that and a' that,
Your ribbon, gown and a' that,
The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The working man's the gold for a' that."

[*Sits again, triumphantly wagging his head*]

SAM. [*Aside*] This is one of the public-house loafers, that wants all the wages and none of the work, an idle old —

[*Goes in disgust to piano, puts on cap, and takes rolls of paper under his arm*]

POLLY. [*To* ECCLES] Esther will be in by-and-by. [*Persuasively*] Do, father.

ECCLES. No, no, I tell you I won't!

POLLY [*whispering, arm round his neck*]. And I'll give you sixpence extra on Saturday.

[ECCLES'S *face relaxes into a broad grin.* POLLY *gets hat and cloak*]

ECCLES. Ah! you sly little puss, you know how to get over your poor old father.

SAM. [*Aside*] Yes, with sixpence.

POLLY [*putting on bonnet and cloak at door*]. Give the cradle a rock if baby cries.

SAM [*crossing to* ECCLES]. If you should 'appen to want employment or amusement, Mr. Eccles, just cast your eye over this. [*Puts circular on table, then joins* POLLY *at door*] Stop a bit, I've forgot to give the baby one.

[*Throws circular into cradle. Exeunt,* POLLY *first.* ECCLES *takes out pipe from pocket, looks into it, then blows through it making a squeaking noise, and finishes by tenderly placing it on table. He then hunts all his pockets for tobacco, finally finding a little paper packet containing a screw of tobacco in his waistcoat pocket, which he also places on table after turning up the corner of the tablecloth for the purpose of emptying the contents of his pocket of the few remnants of past screws of tobacco on to the bare table and mixing a little out of the packet with it and filling pipe. He then brushes all that remains on the table into the paper packet, pinches it up, and carefully replaces it in waistcoat pocket. Having put the pipe into his mouth, he looks about for a light, across his shoulder and under table, though never rising from the chair; seeing nothing, his face assumes an expression of comic anguish. Turning to table he angrily replaces tablecloth and then notices* SAM'S *circular. His face relaxes into a smile, and picking it up he tears the circular in half, makes a spill of it, and lighting it at fire, stands, with his back to fireplace, and smokes vigorously*]

ECCLES. Poor Esther Nice market she's brought her pigs to — ugh! Mind the baby indeed! What good is he to me? That fool of a girl to throw away all her chances! — a *honourable-hess* — and her father not to have on him the price of a pint of early beer or a quartern of cool, refreshing gin! Stopping in here to rock a young honourable! Cuss him!

[*Business, puffs smoke in baby's face, rocking cradle*]

Are we slaves, we working men? [*Sings savagely*] "Britons never, never, never shall be —" [*Nodding his head sagaciously, sits by table*] I won't stand this, I've writ to the old cat — I mean to the Marquissy — to tell her that her daughter-in-law and her grandson is almost starving. That fool Esther is too proud to write to her for money. I hate pride — it's *beastly!* [*Rising*] There's no beastly pride about me. [*Goes up, smacking his lips*] I'm as dry as a lime-kiln. [*Takes up jug*] Milk! — [*with disgust*] for this young aristocratic pauper. Everybody in the house is sacrificed for him! [*At foot of cradle, with arms on chair back*] And to think that a *working man*, and a member of the Committee of Banded Brothers for the Regeneration of Human Kind, by means of equal diffusion of intelligence and equal division of property, should be thusty, while this cub — [*Draws aside curtain, and looks at child. After a pause* —] That there coral he's got round his neck is *gold*, real *gold!* [*With hand on knob at end of cradle*] Oh, Society! Oh, Governments! Oh, Class Legislation! — *is this right?* Shall this mindless wretch enjoy himself, while sleeping, with a jewelled gawd, and his poor old grandfather want the price of half a pint? *No!* it shall not be! Rather than see it, I will myself resent this outrage on the rights of man! and in this holy crusade of class against class, of the weak and lowly against the *powerful and strong* — [*pointing to child*] — I will strike one blow for freedom! [*Goes to back of cradle*] He's asleep. It will fetch ten bob round the corner; and if the Marquissy gives us anything it can be got out with some

o' that. [*Steals coral*] Lie still, my darling! — it's grandfather a-watchin' over you —

> "Who ran to catch me when I fell,
> And kicked the place to make it well?
> My grandfather!"

[*Rocking cradle with one hand; leaves it quickly, and as he takes hat off piano* ESTHER *enters. She is dressed as a widow, her face pale, and her manner quick and imperious. She carries a parcel and paper bag of rusks in her hand; she puts parcel on table, goes to cradle, kneels down and kisses child*]

ECCLES. My lovey had a nice walk? You should wrap yourself up well, — you are so liable to catch cold.

ESTHER. My Georgy? — Where's his coral? [ECCLES, *going to door, fumbles with lock nervously, and is going out as* ESTHER *speaks*] Gone! — Father! [*Rising* — ECCLES *stops*] The child's coral — where is it?

ECCLES [*confused*]. Where's what, duckey?

ESTHER. The coral! You've got it, — I know it! Give it me! [*Quickly and imperiously*] Give it me! [ECCLES *takes coral from his pocket and gives it back*] If you *dare* to touch *my* child — [*Goes to cradle*]

ECCLES. Esther! [*Going quickly to piano and banging hat on it*] Am I not your father? —

[ESTHER *gets round to front of table*]

ESTHER. And I am his mother!

ECCLES [*coming to her*]. Do you bandy words with me, you pauper, you pauper!!! to whom I have given shelter — shelter to you and your brat! I've a good mind — [*Raising his clenched fist*]

ESTHER [*confronting him*]. If you dare! I am no longer your little drudge — your frightened servant. When mother died — [ECCLES *changes countenance and cowers beneath her glance*] — and I was so high, I tended you, and worked for you — and you beat me. That time is past. I am a woman — I am a wife — a widow — a *mother!* Do you think I will let you outrage *him?* Touch me if you dare! [*Advancing a step*]

ECCLES [*bursting into tears and coming down*]. And this is my own child, which I nussed when a babby, and sang "Cootsicum Coo" to afore she could speak. [*Gets hat from piano, and returns a step or two*] Hon. Mrs. De Alroy [ESTHER *drops down behind chair by table*], I forgive you for all that you have said. I forgive you for all that you have done. In everything that I have done I have acted with the best intentions. May the babe in that cradle never treat you as you have this day *tret* a grey 'aired father. May he never cease to love and *h*onour you, as you have ceased to love and *h*onour me, after all that I have done for you, and the position to which I have raised you by my own *industry*. [*Goes to door*] May he never behave to you like the bad daughters of King Lear; and may you never live to feel how much more sharper than a serpent's [*slight pause as if remembering quotation*] scale it is to have a thankless child! [*Exit*]

ESTHER [*kneeling back of cradle*]. My darling! [*Arranging bed and placing coral to baby's lips, then to her own*] Mamma's come back to her own. Did she stay away from him so long? [*Rises and looks at sabre, etc.*] My George! to think that you can never look upon his face or hear his voice. My brave, gallant, handsome husband! My lion and my love! [*Comes down, pacing stage*] Oh! to be a soldier, and to fight the wretches who destroyed him — who took my darling from me! [*Action of cutting with sabre*] To gallop miles upon their upturned faces. [*Crossing with action, breaks down sobbing at mantelpiece; sees letter*] What's this? Captain Hawtree's hand. [*Sitting in chair, reads, at left hand of table*] "My dear Mrs. D'Alroy, — I returned to England less than a fortnight ago. I have some papers and effects of my poor friend's, which I am anxious to deliver to you, and I beg of you to name a day when I can call with them and see you; at the same time let me express my deepest sympathy with your affliction. Your husband's loss was mourned by every man in the regiment. [ESTHER *lays the letter on her heart, and then resumes reading*] I have heard with great pain of the pecuniary embarrassments into which accident and imprudence of others have placed you. I trust you will not consider me, one of poor George's oldest comrades and friends, either intrusive or impertinent in sending the enclosed [*she takes out a cheque*], and in hoping that, should any further difficulties

arise, you will inform me of them, and remember that I am, dear Mrs. D'Alroy, now, and always, your faithful and sincere friend, Arthur Hawtree." [Esther *goes to cradle and bends over it*] Oh, *his* boy, if you could read it!

[*Sobs, with head on head of cradle*]

[*Enter* Polly]

Polly. Father gone!

Esther. Polly, you look quite flurried.

[Polly *laughs and whispers to* Esther]

[*near head of table, taking* Polly *in her arms and kissing her*] So soon? Well, my darling, I hope you may be happy.

Polly. Yes. Sam's going to speak to father about it this afternoon. [*Crosses round table, putting rusks in saucepan*] Did you see the agent, dear?

Esther [*sits by table*] Yes; the manager didn't come — he broke his appointment again.

Polly [*sits opposite at table*]. Nasty, rude fellow!

Esther. The agent said it didn't matter, he thought I should get the engagement. He'll only give me thirty shillings a week, though.

Polly. But you said that two pounds was the regular salary.

Esther. Yes, but they know I'm poor, and want the engagement, and so take advantage of me.

Polly. Never mind, Esther. I put the dress in that bandbox. It looks almost as good as new.

Esther. I've had a letter from Captain Hawtree.

Polly. I know, dear; he came here last night.

Esther. A dear, good letter — speaking of George, and enclosing a cheque for thirty pounds.

Polly. Oh, how kind! Don't you tell father.

[*Noise of carriage-wheels without*]

Esther. I sha'n't.

[Eccles *enters, breathless.* Esther *and* Polly *rise*]

Eccles. It's the Marquissy in her coach. [Esther *puts on the lid of bandbox*] Now, girls, do be civil to her, and she may do something for us. [*Places hat on piano*] I see the coach as I was coming out of the "Rainbow."

[*Hastily pulls an old comb out of his pocket, and puts his hair in order*]

Esther. The Marquise!

[Esther *comes down to end of table,* Polly *holding her hand*]

Eccles [*at door*]. This way, my lady — up them steps. They're rather awkward for the likes o' you; but them as is poor and lowly must do as best they can with steps and circumstances.

[*Enter* Marquise. *She surveys the place with aggressive astonishment*]

Marquise [*going down, half aside*]. What a hole! And to think that my grandson should breathe such an atmosphere, and be contaminated by such associations! [*To* Eccles, *who is a little up*] Which is the young woman who married my son?

Esther. I am Mrs. George D'Alroy, widow of George D'Alroy. Who are you?

Marquise. I am his mother, the Marquise de St. Maur.

Esther [*with the grand air*]. Be seated, I beg.

[Eccles *takes chair from right centre, which* Esther *immediately seizes as* Sam *enters with an easy chair on his head, which he puts down, not seeing* Marquise, *who instantly sits down in it, concealing it completely*]

Sam [*astonished*]. It's the Marquissy! [*Looking at her*] My eyes! These aristocrats are fine women — plenty of 'em — [*describing circle*] quality and quantity!

Polly. Go away, Sam; you'd better come back.

[Eccles *nudges him and bustles him towards door. Exit* Sam. Eccles *shuts door on him*]

Eccles [*coming down right of* Marquise, *rubbing his hands*] If we'd a-know'd your ladyship 'ad been a-coming we'd a' 'ad the place cleaned up a bit.

[*With hands on chair back, in lower right corner of stage. He gets round to right, behind* Marquise, *who turns the chair slightly from him*]

Polly. Hold your tongue, father!

[Eccles *crushed*]

Marquise. [*To* Esther] You remember me, do you not?

Esther. Perfectly, though I only saw you once. [*Seating herself en grande dame*] May I ask what has procured me the honour of this visit?

Marquise. I was informed that

you were in want, and I came to offer you assistance.

ESTHER. I thank you for your offer, and the delicate consideration for my feelings with which it is made. I need no assistance.

[ECCLES *groans and leans on piano*]

MARQUISE. A letter that I received last night informed me that you did.

ESTHER. May I ask if that letter came from Captain Hawtree?

MARQUISE. No — from this person — your father, I think.

ESTHER. [*To* ECCLES] How dare you interfere in my affairs?

ECCLES. My lovey, I did it with the best intentions.

MARQUISE. Then you will not accept assistance from me?

ESTHER. No.

POLLY [*aside to* ESTHER, *holding her hand*]. Bless you, my darling.

[POLLY *standing beside her*]

MARQUISE. But you have a child — a son — my grandson. [*With emotion*]

ESTHER. Master D'Alroy wants for nothing.

POLLY. [*Aside*] And never shall.

[ECCLES *groans and turns on to piano*]

MARQUISE. I came here to propose that my grandson should go back with me. [POLLY *rushes up to cradle*]

ESTHER [*rising defiantly*]. What! part with my boy! I'd sooner die!

MARQUISE. You can see him when you wish. As for money, I —

ESTHER. Not for ten thousand million worlds — not for ten thousand million marchionesses!

ECCLES. Better do what the good lady asks you, my dear; she's advising you for your own good, and for the child's likewise.

MARQUISE. Surely you cannot intend to bring up my son's son in a place like this?

ESTHER. I do. [*Goes up to cradle*]

ECCLES. It *is* a poor place, and we are poor people, sure enough. We ought not to fly in the faces of our pastors and masters — our pastresses and mistresses.

POLLY. [*Aside*] Oh, hold your tongue, do! [*Up at cradle*]

ESTHER [*before cradle*]. Master George D'Alroy will remain with his mother. The offer to take him from her is an insult to his dead father and to him.

ECCLES. [*Aside*] He don't seem to feel it, stuck-up little beast.

MARQUISE. But you have no money — how can you rear him? — how can you educate him? — how can you live?

ESTHER [*tearing dress from bandbox*]. Turn columbine, — go on the stage again and dance.

MARQUISE [*rising*]. You are insolent — you forget that I am a lady.

ESTHER. You forget that I am a mother. Do you dare to offer to buy my child — *his* breathing image, *his* living memory — with money? [*Crosses to door and throws it open*] There is the door — go! [*Picture*]

ECCLES. [*To* MARQUISE, *who has risen, aside*] Very sorry, my lady, as you should be tret in this way, which was not my wishes.

MARQUISE. Silence! [ECCLES *retreats, putting back chair.* MARQUISE *goes up to door*] Mrs. D'Alroy, if anything could have increased my sorrow for the wretched marriage my poor son was *decoyed* into, it would be your conduct this day to his mother. [*Exit*]

ESTHER [*falling into* POLLY'S *arms*]. Oh, Polly! Polly!

ECCLES [*looking after her*]. To go away and not to leave a sov. behind her! [*Running up to open door*] Cat! Cat! Stingy old cat!

[*Almost runs to fire, and pokes it violently; carriage-wheels heard without*]

ESTHER. I'll go to my room and lie down. Let me have the baby, or that old woman may come back and steal him.

[*Exit* ESTHER, *and* POLLY *follows with baby*]

ECCLES. Well, women is the obstinatest devils as never wore horseshoes. Children? Beasts! Beasts!

[*Enter* SAM *and* POLLY]

SAM. Come along, Polly, and let's get it over at once. [SAM *places cap on piano, and goes to table.* POLLY *takes bandbox from table, and places it up stage*] Now, Mr. Eccles [ECCLES *turns suddenly, facing* SAM], since you've been talkin' on family matters, I'd like to 'ave a word with yer, so take this opportunity to —

ECCLES [*waving his hand grandly*]. Take what you like, and then order more [*rising and leaning over table*], Samuel Gerridge. That hand is a hand that has never turned its back on a friend, or a bottle to give him.

[*Sings, front of table*]

"I'll stand by my friend,
I'll stand by my friend,
I'll stand by my friend,
If he'll stand to me — me, gentlemen!"

SAM. Well, Mr. Eccles, sir, it's this —

POLLY [*aside, coming down to* SAM]. Don't tell him too sudden, Sam — it might shock his feelings.

SAM. It's this; yer know that for the last four years I've been keepin' company with Mary — Polly.

[*Turning to her and smiling.* ECCLES *drops into chair as if shot*]

ECCLES. Go it! go it! strike home, young man! Strike on this grey head! [*Sings*] "Britons, strike home!" Here [*tapping his chest*], to my heart! Don't spare me! Have a go at my grey hairs. Pull 'em — pull 'em out! A long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together!

[*Cries, and drops his face on arm on table*]

POLLY. Oh, father! I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world.

[*Patting his head*]

SAM. No, Mr. Eccles, I don't want to 'urt your feelin's, but I'm a-goin' to enter upon a business. Here's a circular. [*Offering one*]

ECCLES [*indignantly*]. Circ'lars. What are circ'lars? — compared to a father's feelings?

SAM. And I want Polly to name the day, sir, and so I ask you —

ECCLES. This is 'ard, this is 'ard. One of my daughters marries a soger. The other goes a-gasfitting.

SAM [*annoyed*]. The business which will enable me to maintain a wife is that of the late Mr. Binks, plumber, glazier, etc.

ECCLES [*rising, sings. Air,* "*Lost Rosabelle*"].

"They have given thee to a plumber,
They have broken every vow,
They have given thee to a plumber,
And my heart, my heart is breaking now."

[*Drops into chair again*]

Now, gentlemen!

[SAM *thrusts circulars into his pocket, and turns away angrily*]

POLLY. You know, father, you can come and see me. [*Leans over him*]

SAM [*sotto voce*]. No, no.

[*Motions to* POLLY]

ECCLES [*looking up*]. So I can, and that's a comfort. [*Shaking her hand*] And you can come and see me, and that's a comfort. I'll come and see you often — very often — every day [SAM *turns up stage in horror*], and crack a fatherly bottle [*rising*], and shed a friendly tear.

[*Wipes eyes with dirty pocket-handkerchief, which he pulls from breast pocket*]

POLLY. Do, father, do.

[*Goes up and gets tea-tray*]

SAM [*with a gulp*]. Yes, Mr. Eccles, do.

[*Goes to* POLLY *and gesticulates behind tray*]

ECCLES. I will. [*Goes to centre of stage*]. And this it is to be a father. I would part with any of my children for their own good, readily — if I was paid for it. [*Goes to right corner; sings*] "For I know that the angels are whispering to me" — me, gentlemen!

[POLLY *gets tea-things*]

SAM. I'll try and make Polly a good husband, and anything that I can do to prove it [*lowering his voice*], in the way of spirituous liquors and tobacco [*slipping coin into his hand, unseen by* POLLY] shall be done.

ECCLES [*lightening up and placing his left hand on* SAM'S *head*].

"Be kind to thy father,
Wherever you be,
For he is a blessing
And credit to thee, — thee, gentlemen."

[*Gets to centre of stage*]. Well, my children — bless you, take the blessing of a grey-'aired father. [POLLY *looking from one to the other*] Samuel Gerridge, she shall be thine. [*Mock heroically, looking at money*] You shall be his wife [*looking at* POLLY] and you [*looking at* SAM] shall be her husband — for a husband I know no fitter — no "gas-fitter" man. [*Runs to piano and takes hat; goes to door, looks comically pathetic at* SAM *and* POLLY, *puts on hat and comes towards centre of stage*] I've a friend waiting for me round the corner, which I want to have a word with; and may you never know how much more sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a marriageable daughter.
[*Sings*]

"When I heard she was married,
I breathed not a tone,
The heyes of all round me
Was fixed on my h'own;
I flew to my chamber
To hide my despair,

I tore the bright circlet
  Of gems from my hair.
When I heard she was married,
When I heard she was married — "

[*Breaks down. Exit*]

POLLY [*drying her eyes*]. There, Sam. I always told you that though father had his faults, his heart was in the right place.

SAM. Poor Polly.

[*Crosses to fireplace. Knock at door*]

POLLY [*top of table*]. Come in.

[*Enter* HAWTREE]

Major Hawtree.

[SAM *turns away as they shake hands*]

HAWTREE. I met the Marquise's carriage on the bridge. Has she been here?

[SAM *at fire, with back to it*]

POLLY. Yes.

HAWTREE. What happened?

POLLY. Oh, she wanted to take away the child. [*At head of table*]

SAM. In the coach.

[POLLY *sets tea-things*]

HAWTREE. And what did Mrs. D'Alroy say to that?

SAM. Mrs. D'Alroy said that she'd see 'er blowed first! [POLLY *pushes* SAM] — or words to that effect.

HAWTREE. I'm sorry to hear this; I had hoped — however, that's over.

POLLY [*sitting at table*]. Yes, it's over; and I hope we shall hear no more about it. Want to take away the child, indeed — like her impudence! What next! [*Getting ready tea-things*] Esther's gone to lie down. I sha'n't wake her up for tea, though she's had nothing to eat all day.

SAM [*head of table*]. Shall I fetch some shrimps?

POLLY. No. What made you think of shrimps?

SAM. They're a relish, and consolin' — at least I always found 'em so.

[*Check lights gradually*]

POLLY. I won't ask you to take tea with us, Major, — you're too grand.

[SAM *motions approbation to* POLLY, *not wanting* HAWTREE *to remain*]

HAWTREE [*placing hat on piano*]. Not at all. I shall be most happy. [*Aside*] 'Pon my word, these are very good sort of people. I'd no idea —

SAM [*points to* HAWTREE]. He's a-goin' to stop to tea, — well, I ain't.

[*Goes up to window and sits.* HAWTREE *crosses and sits opposite* POLLY *at table*]

POLLY. Sam! Sam! [*Pause — he says* Eh?] Pull down the blind and light the gas.

SAM. No, don't light up; I like this sort of dusk. It's unbusiness-like, but pleasant.

[SAM *cuts enormous slice of bread and hands it on point of knife to Hawtree. Cuts small lump of butter and hands it on point of knife to Hawtree, who looks at it through eye-glass, then takes it. Sam then helps himself. Polly meantime has poured out tea in two cups, and one saucer for Sam, sugars them, and then hands cup and saucer to* HAWTREE, *who has both hands full. He takes it awkwardly and places it on table.* POLLY, *having only one spoon, tastes* SAM'S *tea, then stirs* HAWTREE'S, *attracting his attention by doing so. He looks into his tea-cup.* POLLY *stirs her own tea, and drops spoon into* HAWTREE'S *cup, causing it to spurt in his eye. He drops eye-glass and wipes his eyes*]

POLLY [*making tea*]. Sugar, Sam! [SAM *takes tea and sits facing fire*]. Oh, there isn't any milk — it'll be here directly, it's just his time.

VOICE. [*Outside; rattle of milk-pails*] Mia-oow.

POLLY. There he is. [*Knock at door*] Oh, I know; I owe him fourpence. [*Feeling in her pocket*] Sam, have you got fourpence?

[*Knock again, louder*]

SAM. No [*his mouth full*], — I ain't got no fourpence.

POLLY. He's very impatient. Come in!

[*Enter* GEORGE, *his face bronzed, and in full health. He carries a milk-can in his hand, which, after putting his hat on piano, he places on table*]

GEORGE. A fellow hung this on the railings, so I brought it in.

[POLLY *sees him, and gradually sinks down under table on one side. Then* SAM, *with his mouth full, and bread and butter in hand, does the same on the other.* HAWTREE *pushes himself back a space, in chair; remains motionless.* GEORGE *astonished. Picture*]

BECKET

(1893)

[Printed, 1879]

By Alfred Tennyson

ALFRED TENNYSON

(1809–1892)

Tennyson was sixty-six years old when he began writing plays. He had gained his reputation as the leading lyric poet of his time. And he had put a stamp on his writings, not only distinctively English, but as reflecting the spirit of his age. Tennyson is more specifically dated than Browning. He is more reflective of the scientific trend of the Victorian era, and he is as foreign to the renaissance which began in England during the late "eighties" as though he were of a period far removed. His religious questionings were thoroughly in accord with the state of upheaval created by the widespread discussion of the theory of evolution, and he was truly and faithfully dealing with the problems open-mindedly. The early reactions of a fair conservative are expressed in Tennyson's poems: the attitude toward the woman question, in "The Princess"; the moral preachments, throughout "In Memoriam" and "Maud"; and the scientific interest represented, not only in his longer poems, but in such a small piece as "Flower in the Crannied Wall."

Tennyson's interest in the theatre was not due to any impelling love of the dramatic. His work, heretofore, had been of a narrative, epic, idyllic character. It had been tested lyrically and technically, and had come forth wonderfully purified in form and expression. "The Idylls of the King" represent a narrative as formal and decorative as the pictures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti or of Aubrey De Vere. Though filled with chivalry, they have about them none of the original, rugged humanity of Sir Thomas Mallory. They are polished to suit the Tennyson technique. He had, in "Maud", attempted a certain form of play-writing — a form which he called *monodrame*,— but this was not, in any sense, *of* the theatre or *for* the theatre. He was not essentially dramatic in his depiction of character, nor were his monologues, when he wrote them, fraught with any of the deep, vivid humanity seen in Browning.

One might, therefore, say that Tennyson, in comparison with Browning, was the less prepared of the two to meet the requirements of the stage. And we doubt whether he would have attempted a task for which he was not equipped had it not been that he was encouraged to do so through the cordial interest of Henry Irving. Irving and Macready not only stood sponsors for the dramas of Tennyson and Browning, but it is because of them that the two poets became dramatic experimenters.

Tennyson's interest in Elizabethan drama prompted him, not only in his form, but, likewise, in his subject-matter. We are told that he selected his topics with the express purpose of explaining certain national ideals or ideas left untouched by Shakespeare.

The order of the Tennyson dramas is as follows: "Queen Mary" (1875); "Harold" (1876); "The Falcon" (1879); "The Cup" (1881); "The Promise of May" (1882); "Becket" (1884); "The Foresters" (1892). These are based on

very definite sources, showing that Tennyson was a student of his particular periods, and was moved not so much by inspiration as by historical accuracy. When he wrote "Queen Mary," he studied Froude. There is no indication that he read Hugo's "Mary Tudor", or that he was indebted to the plays on "Queen Mary" by Decker and Webster, or Thomas Heywood. When he wrote "Harold", he read carefully Freeman's "History of the Norman Conquest", and he analyzed fully the situations in Bulwer's novel, "Harold."

His preparations for "Becket" were equally as careful. The poet himself says:

> Admirers of "Becket" will find that Becket's letters, and the writings of Herbert of Bosham, Fitzstephen, and John of Salisbury throw great light on those days. Bishop Lightfoot found out about *Rosamund* for me.

Even in his lighter pieces Tennyson turned to others for his plots. "The Cup" was taken from Plutarch's "De Mulierum Virtutibus", and "The Falcon" from incidents in Boccaccio's "Decameron." He was self-conscious in his national ambitions: in "Queen Mary" there is a distinct desire to paint the individual claiming religious liberty; in "Becket" there is a formal struggle between the Crown and the Church; in "Harold" we get racial conflict; and in "The Foresters", as Arthur C. Benson says, there is a reflection of the state of the people during the Magna Charta, when the struggle of political liberty over absolutism began.

Tennyson was not taken over-seriously in the dramatic world of his day. In fact, it was Irving alone who brought the poet to success. The public did not even have respect for the official character of the Poet Laureate. It is curious, likewise, to note two other qualities in Tennyson which challenged the manner of the times and the limitations of royalty. "The Promise of May" was a terrible failure, partly because of the free discussion invited by the moral problem involved. It is interesting to note the contemporaneous debates created by Tennyson's reactions on moral, spiritual, and scientific matters. In addition to which, the Victorian stage was handicapped by the ignorance and limitations of Queen Victoria, whose reputation was largely dependent on the intellectual forcefulness and diplomatic cleverness of her Prime Ministers — Lord Beaconsfield, W. E. Gladstone, and Lord Salisbury. It is said that when a command performance of "Becket" was ordered, it did not quite satisfy the old-fashioned tastes of the Queen, who, in all probability, would much rather have been regaled with stage pieces like "Sweethearts" or "Sweet Lavender."

The history of the Tennyson plays involves a record of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. The actor produced "Queen Mary" at the London Lyceum, April 18, 1876, with Miss Bateman in the title rôle and himself as *Philip of Spain*. He also gave "The Cup" and "Becket." "The Falcon" was produced at the St. James's Theatre, under the management of John Hare and the Kendals, in December, 1879; "The Cup" was produced by Irving and Terry on January 3, 1881; "The Promise of May" at the Globe Theatre, on November 11, 1882; "Becket" at the Lyceum, on February 6, 1893; and finally "The Foresters" was given an American production by Augustin Daly, on March 17, 1892.

It was in 1878 that Tennyson was reported as having had in preparation since 1876 a drama on "Becket." Theatrical papers announced, in October of the next year, that it was understood Irving was considering the manuscript. The actor had been a friend of the poet since 1876, but his friendship was not of that order which

could upset the wisdom of the manager. "Becket" was held for many years, until the times, as Irving thought, were ready for it. According to the fashion of the poet, there were proofs of the play in 1879, and its publication was deferred until December, 1884. According to the poet's son, Tennyson visited Canterbury in August, 1877, and in this way obtained local color.

It was Irving's firm impression that "Becket" was a finer play than Shakespeare's "King John." But, however that may have been, he was convinced, in 1879, that public taste was not ready for it. There must have been some doubt on the part of Tennyson as to how far his readers would take the Catholicism of the piece, for he asked W. T. Ward to come and hear him read it, and to talk over the ecclesiastical points with him. Tennyson was attacked on all sides for his lack of noble handling of *Becket's* character; especially was he scored for suggesting any offensive element in *Becket's* association with the fair *Rosamund*. From the Catholic point of view, no better article may be found than Maurice T. Eagan's " 'St. Thomas of Canterbury' and 'Becket' ", in which he contrasts Tennyson's drama with Aubrey De Vere's dramatic poem dealing with the same figure. The whole article attacks Tennyson's ignorance of Catholicism and his wilful distortion of the truth. "The pride and impatience of his *Becket* is only equalled by the self-conceit of his *St. Simon Stylites*," so this critic asserts.

It has not been the judgment of the times, since "Becket" was written, that it is a great play, nor that it reflects perfectly the spirit of the twelfth century or the character of *Henry*, claimed for it by the historian, John Richard Greene. One can see, however, why it appealed to Irving. Its dominant recommendations are its great power in one character, and its pictorial pageantry, both of which offered Irving ample scope for colour and display. Readers have an opportunity of studying how far Irving struggled with the original version of the play; for the stage edition, wherein transpositions of scenes and cuts are indicated, was issued at the time of the production at the Lyceum.

The preparations for the Irving performance took place during the very last days of Tennyson's life; some of the final poetic lines written by him were penned at the request of Irving, to go at the end of the Northampton scene, — what Hallam Tennyson calls the "anthem speech."

Irving writes:

> On the appearance of "Becket", I pointed out to Tennyson that the poem seemed to me to have great possibilities if I could only get it into stage shape. I asked him if he would allow it to be produced in an altered form, and he replied that I might do anything I pleased. Accordingly, I made such changes as I thought necessary, and sent it to him cut for the stage, and suggesting that he could make the changes, and this he did, adding a speech at the end of the first act.

All during Tennyson's final illness, he was very much concerned about rehearsals. Irving again writes:

> One of the most touching incidents which I remember occurred while he was on his deathbed. He turned to the physician, Dr. Dabbs, who told me of the incident, and said: "I suppose I shall never see 'Becket.' " "I fear not," said the doctor. "They did not do me justice with 'The Promise of May' ", said the dying poet, "but Irving will do me justice in 'Becket.' "

The play[1] was produced at a cost of £4,723 11*s.* 2*d.* And because of the splendour of the pageantry and the very powerful acting of Irving, it was one of the successes of the season, running one hundred and twelve times.

There are some splendid purple patches of poetry in this play, but there are likewise many scenes that are episodic and throw small light on the transposition of *Becket's* character from the courtier-priest to the domineering prelate. Irving having appeared as *Richelieu* and *Cardinal Wolsey*, the mitre of *Becket* in consequence sat easily upon his head. The interest in the acted play, apart from its colour and proportion, was due to the interest awakened by what Irving put into it of fine characterization and technical art. A contemporary criticism, written for the "Theatrical World" of 1894, by Archer, is quoted herewith:

> "Becket" [July 9–20, 1894], revived last week at the Lyceum, is a mild and dignified rebuke to apriorist criticism, with its rules and formulas. There is no rule that it does not break, no formula that it fails to set at naught. It is rambling, disjointed, structureless; its psychological processes take place between the acts; it overrides history for the sake of an infantile love-interest; its blank verse is "undramatic", and its humour is — well, unsophisticated. In short, it is nothing that it ought to be, and everything that it oughtn't. Literally everything: for it is what most of all it oughtn't to be — a success. It delighted the audience on the evening when I saw it — the third of the revival. There was a genuine warmth in their applause which did my heart good, for it entirely expressed my own sentiments. All Miss Terry's charm cannot make the *Rosamund* scenes very interesting to me; but the nobility and pathos of Mr. Irving's *Becket* are as irresistible as ever. This is undoubtedly one of his great achievements; an entirely beautiful and memorable creation. The verse may be as "undramatic" as you please, but it is a delight to hear Mr. Irving speak it; and, for my part, I much prefer Mr. Tennyson's "undramatic" verse to the self-consciously and spasmodically dramatic iambics of some other poets. "Becket", in sum, is not a coherent, organic drama, but a series of animated historic scenes, beautifully written, staged, spoken and acted.

As a matter of historical record, let it be said that Irving was playing *Becket* on the evening (October 13, 1905) when he was stricken, and probably the final words that came from the actor's mouth were those significant lines spoken by *Becket* at the close of the play:

"Into Thy hands, O Lord — into Thy hands! —"

[1] Adams, in his "Dictionary of the Drama", mentions the following dramas dealing with Becket: Bishop of Bale's "Of the Impostures of Thomas Becket"; W. H. Ireland's "Henry II" (1799); Douglas Jerrold's "Thomas à Beckett" (1829); R. Cattermole's "Becket: A Historical Tragedy" (1832); George Darley's "Thomas à Becket" (1840); Sir Arthur Helps' "King Henry the Second" (1843); George Wightwick's "Henry II" (1851); Dr. Charles Grindrod's "King Henry II" (1883); Aubrey De Vere's "St. Thomas of Canterbury" (1876).

Adams adds: An adaptation of Tennyson's drama, consisting mostly of the scenes relating to *Rosamund*, adapted by E. W. Godwin, performed as "Fair Rosamund", in Cannizaro Woods, Wimbledon, summer of 1886, with Lady Archibald Campbell as *Rosamund*, Bassett Roe as *Henry II*, F. H. Macklin as *Becket*, Miss Maud Millett as *Margery*, Miss Geneviève Ward as *Queen Eleanor*. Irving's arrangement was given, London Lyceum, February 6, 1893; English provinces in 1904, when Mabel Hackney was *Rosamund*, Mrs. Cecil Raleigh *Eleanor*. First in America, September, 1893, San Francisco.

BECKET

BY ALFRED TENNYSON

The collected works of Lord Tennyson are published in America by
The Macmillan Company.

To the Lord Chancellor,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL OF SELBORNE

My dear Selborne — To you, the honoured Chancellor of our own day, I dedicate this dramatic memorial of your great predecessor; — which, altho' not intended in its present form to meet the exigencies of our modern theatre, has nevertheless — for so you have assured me — won your approbation. — Ever yours TENNYSON.

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CAST OF INITIAL PERFORMANCE OF BECKET

London Lyceum Theatre
February 6, 1893

HENRY II	*son of the Earl of Anjou*	Mr. William Terriss
THOMAS BECKET	*Chancellor of England, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury*	Mr. Irving
GILBERT FOLIOT	*Bishop of London*	Mr. Lacy
ROGER	*Archbishop of York*	Mr. Beaumont
	Bishop of Hereford	Mr. Cushing
HILARY	*Bishop of Chichester*	Mr. Archer
JOCELYN	*Bishop of Salisbury*	———
JOHN OF SALISBURY	*friends of Becket*	Mr. Bishop
HERBERT OF BOSHAM		Mr. Haviland
WALTER MAP	*reputed author of "Golias," Latin poems against the priesthood*	———
KING LOUIS OF FRANCE		Mr. Bond
GEOFFREY	*son of Rosamund and Henry*	———
GRIM	*a monk of Cambridge*	Mr. W. H. Holloway
SIR REGINALD FITZURSE	*the four knights of the King's household, enemies of Becket*	Mr. Frank Cooper
SIR RICHARD DE BRITO		Mr. Tyars
SIR WILLIAM DE TRACY		Mr. Hague
SIR HUGH DE MORVILLE		Mr. Percival
DE BROC OF SALTWOOD CASTLE		Mr. Tabb
LORD LEICESTER		Mr. Harvey
PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA		Mr. Howe
TWO KNIGHT TEMPLARS		Mr. Gordon Craig ———
JOHN OF OXFORD	*called the Swearer*	Mr. Ian Robertson
ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE	*Queen of England (divorced from Louis of France)*	Miss Geneviève Ward
ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD		Miss Ellen Terry
MARGERY		Miss Kate Phillips

Knights, Monks, Beggars, etc.

BECKET

PROLOGUE

A Castle in Normandy. Interior of the Hall. Roofs of a City seen thro' Windows.

[HENRY *and* BECKET *at chess*]

HENRY. So then our good Archbishop Theobald
Lies dying.

BECKET. I am grieved to know as much.

HENRY. But we must have a mightier man than he
For his successor.

BECKET. Have you thought of one?

HENRY. A cleric lately poison'd his own mother,
And being brought before the courts of the Church,
They but degraded him. I hope they whipt him.
I would have hang'd him.

BECKET. It is your move.

HENRY. Well — there. [*Moves*]
The Church in the pell-mell of Stephen's time
Hath climb'd the throne and almost clutch'd the crown;
But by the royal customs of our realm
The Church should hold her baronies of me,
Like other lords amenable to law.
I'll have them written down and made the law.

BECKET. My liege, I move my bishop.

HENRY. And if I live,
No man without my leave shall excommunicate
My tenants or my household.

BECKET. Look to your king.

HENRY. No man without my leave shall cross the seas
To set the Pope against me — I pray your pardon.

BECKET. Well — will you move?

HENRY. There. [*Moves*]

BECKET. Check — you move so wildly.

HENRY. There then! [*Moves*]

BECKET. Why — there then, for you see my bishop
Hath brought your king to a standstill. You are beaten.

HENRY [*kicks over the board*]. Why, there then — down go bishop and king together.
I loathe being beaten; had I fixt my fancy
Upon the game I should have beaten thee,
But that was vagabond.

BECKET. Where, my liege? With Phryne,
Or Lais, or thy Rosamund, or another?

HENRY. My Rosamund is no Lais, Thomas Becket;
And yet she plagues me too — no fault in her —
But that I fear the Queen would have her life.

BECKET. Put her away, put her away, my liege!
Put her away into a nunnery!
Safe enough there from her to whom thou art bound
By Holy Church. And wherefore should she seek
The life of Rosamund de Clifford more
Than that of other paramours of thine?

HENRY. How dost thou know I am not wedded to her?

BECKET. How should I know?

HENRY. That is my secret, Thomas.

BECKET. State secrets should be patent to the statesman
Who serves and loves his king, and whom the king
Loves not as statesman, but true lover and friend.

HENRY. Come, come, thou art but deacon, not yet bishop,
No, nor archbishop, nor my confessor yet.

I would to God thou wert, for I should find
An easy father confessor in thee.
BECKET. St. Denis, that thou shouldst not. I should beat
Thy kingship as my bishop hath beaten it.
HENRY. Hell take thy bishop then, and my kingship too!
Come, come, I love thee and I know thee, I know thee,
A doter on white pheasant-flesh at feasts,
A sauce-deviser for thy days of fish,
A dish-designer, and most amorous
Of good old red sound liberal Gascon wine:
Will not thy body rebel, man, if thou flatter it?
BECKET. That palate is insane which cannot tell
A good dish from a bad, new wine from old.
HENRY. Well, who loves wine loves woman.
BECKET. So I do.
Men are God's trees, and women are God's flowers;
And when the Gascon wine mounts to my head,
The trees are all the statelier, and the flowers
Are all the fairer.
HENRY. And thy thoughts, thy fancies?
BECKET. Good dogs, my liege, well train'd, and easily call'd
Off from the game.
HENRY. Save for some once or twice,
When they ran down the game and worried it.
BECKET. No, my liege, no! — not once — in God's name, no!
HENRY. Nay, then, I take thee at thy word — believe thee
The veriest Galahad of old Arthur's hall.
And so this Rosamund, my true heart-wife,
Not Eleanor — she whom I love indeed
As a woman should be loved — Why dost thou smile
So dolorously?
BECKET. My good liege, if a man
Wastes himself among women, how should he love
A woman, as a woman should be loved?
HENRY. How shouldst thou know that never hast loved one?
Come, I would give her to thy care in England
When I am out in Normandy or Anjou.
BECKET. My lord, I am your subject, not your —
HENRY. Pander.
God's eyes! I know all that — not my purveyor
Of pleasures, but to save a life — her life;
Ay, and the soul of Eleanor from hell-fire.
I have built a secret bower in England, Thomas,
A nest in a bush.
BECKET. And where, my liege?
HENRY [*whispers*]. Thine ear.
BECKET. That's lone enough.
HENRY [*laying paper on table*]. This chart here marked '*Her Bower*,'
Take, keep it, friend. See, first, a circling wood,
A hundred pathways running everyway,
And then a brook, a bridge; and after that
This labyrinthine brickwork maze in maze,
And then another wood, and in the midst
A garden and my Rosamund. Look, this line —
The rest you see is colour'd green — but this
Draws thro' the chart to her.
BECKET. This blood-red line?
HENRY. Ay! blood, perchance, except thou see to her.
BECKET. And where is she? There in her English nest?
HENRY. Would God she were — no, here within the city.
We take her from her secret bower in Anjou
And pass her to her secret bower in England.
She is ignorant of all but that I love her.
BECKET. My liege, I pray thee let me hence: a widow
And orphan child, whom one of thy wild barons —
HENRY. Ay, ay, but swear to see to her in England.
BECKET. Well, well, I swear, but not to please myself.
HENRY. Whatever come between us?
BECKET. What should come
Between us, Henry?

HENRY. Nay — I know not, Thomas.
BECKET. What need then? Well — whatever come between us. [*Going*]
HENRY. A moment! thou didst help me to my throne
In Theobald's time, and after by thy wisdom
Hast kept it firm from shaking; but now I,
For my realm's sake, myself must be the wizard
To raise that tempest which will set it trembling
Only to base it deeper. I, true son
Of Holy Church — no croucher to the Gregories
That tread the kings their children underheel —
Must curb her; and the Holy Father, while
This Barbarossa butts him from his chair,
Will need my help — be facile to my hands.
Now is my time. Yet — lest there should be flashes
And fulminations from the side of Rome,
An interdict on England — I will have
My young son Henry crown'd the King of England,
That so the Papal bolt may pass by England,
As seeming his, not mine, and fall abroad.
I'll have it done — and now.
BECKET. Surely too young
Even for this shadow of a crown; and tho'
I love him heartily, I can spy already
A strain of hard and headstrong in him. Say,
The Queen should play his kingship against thine!
HENRY. I will not think so, Thomas. Who shall crown him?
Canterbury is dying.
BECKET. The next Canterbury.
HENRY. And who shall he be, my friend Thomas? Who?
BECKET. Name him; the Holy Father will confirm him.
HENRY [*lays his hand on* BECKET'S *shoulder*]. Here!
BECKET. Mock me not. I am not even a monk.
Thy jest — no more. Why — look — is this a sleeve
For an archbishop?
HENRY. But the arm within
Is Becket's, who hath beaten down my foes.
BECKET. A soldier's, not a spiritual arm.
HENRY. I lack a spiritual soldier, Thomas —
A man of this world and the next to boot.
BECKET. There's Gilbert Foliot.
HENRY. He! too thin, too thin.
Thou art the man to fill out the Church robe;
Your Foliot fasts and fawns too much for me.
BECKET. Roger of York.
HENRY. Roger is Roger of York.
King, Church, and State to him but foils wherein
To set that precious jewel, Roger of York.
No.
BECKET. Henry of Winchester?
HENRY. Him who crown'd Stephen —
King Stephen's brother! No; too royal for me.
And I'll have no more Anselms.
BECKET. Sire, the business
Of thy whole kingdom waits me: let me go.
HENRY. Answer me first.
BECKET. Then for thy barren jest
Take thou mine answer in bare commonplace —
Nolo episcopari.
HENRY. Ay, but *Nolo*
Archiepiscopari, my good friend,
Is quite another matter.
BECKET. A more awful one.
Make *me* archbishop! Why, my liege, I know
Some three or four poor priests a thousand times
Fitter for this grand function. *Me* archbishop!
God's favour and king's favour might so clash
That thou and I — That were a jest indeed!
HENRY. Thou angerest me, man: I do not jest.

[*Enter* ELEANOR *and* SIR REGINALD FITZURSE]

ELEANOR [*singing*].

Over! the sweet summer closes,
The reign of the roses is done —

HENRY. [*To* BECKET, *who is going*] Thou shalt not go. I have not ended with thee.

ELEANOR [*seeing chart on table*]. This chart with the red line! her bower! whose bower?

HENRY. The chart is not mine, but Becket's: take it, Thomas.

ELEANOR. Becket! O — ay — and these chessmen on the floor — the king's crown broken! Becket hath beaten thee again — and thou hast kicked down the board. I know thee of old.

HENRY. True enough, my mind was set upon other matters.

ELEANOR. What matters? State matters? love matters?

HENRY. My love for thee, and thine for me.

ELEANOR.

Over! the sweet summer closes,
The reign of the roses is done;
Over and gone with the roses,
And over and gone with the sun.

Here; but our sun in Aquitaine lasts longer. I would I were in Aquitaine again — your north chills me.

Over! the sweet summer closes,
And never a flower at the close;
Over and gone with the roses,
And winter again and the snows.

That was not the way I ended it first — but unsymmetrically, preposterously, illogically, out of passion, without art — like a song of the people. Will you have it? The last Parthian shaft of a forlorn Cupid at the King's left breast, and all left-handedness and under-handedness.

And never a flower at the close,
Over and gone with the roses,
Not over and gone with the rose.

True, one rose will outblossom the rest, one rose in a bower. I speak after my fancies, for I am a Troubadour, you know, and won the violet at Toulouse; but my voice is harsh here, not in tune, a nightingale out of season; for marriage, rose or no rose, has killed the golden violet.

BECKET. Madam, you do ill to scorn wedded love.

ELEANOR. So I do. Louis of France loved me, and I dreamed that I loved Louis of France: and I loved Henry of England, and Henry of England dreamed that he loved me; but the marriage-garland withers even with the putting on, the bright link rusts with the breath of the first after-marriage kiss, the harvest moon is the ripening of the harvest, and the honeymoon is the gall of love; he dies of his honeymoon. I could pity this poor world myself that it is no better ordered.

HENRY. Dead is he, my Queen? What, altogether? Let me swear nay to that by this cross on thy neck. God's eyes! what a lovely cross! what jewels!

ELEANOR. Doth it please you? Take it and wear it on that hard heart of yours — there. [*Gives it to him*]

HENRY [*puts it on*]. On this left breast before so hard a heart,
To hide the scar left by thy Parthian dart.

ELEANOR. Has my simple song set you jingling? Nay, if I took and translated that hard heart into our Provençal facilities, I could so play about it with the rhyme —

HENRY. That the heart were lost in the rhyme and the matter in the metre. May we not pray you, Madam, to spare us the hardness of your facility?

ELEANOR. The wells of Castaly are not wasted upon the desert. We did but jest.

HENRY. There's no jest on the brows of Herbert there. What is it, Herbert?

[*Enter* HERBERT OF BOSHAM]

HERBERT. My liege, the good Archbishop is no more.

HENRY. Peace to his soul!

HERBERT. I left him with peace on his face — that sweet other-world smile, which will be reflected in the spiritual body among the angels. But he longed much to see your Grace and the Chancellor ere he past, and his last words were a commendation of Thomas Becket to your Grace as his successor in the archbishoprick.

HENRY. Ha, Becket! thou rememberest our talk!

BECKET. My heart is full of tears — I have no answer.

HENRY. Well, well, old men must die, or the world would grow mouldy, would only breed the past again. Come to me to-morrow. Thou hast but to hold out thy hand. Meanwhile the revenues are mine. A-hawking, a-hawking! If I sit, I grow fat.

[*Leaps over the table, and exit*]

BECKET. He did prefer me to the chancellorship,
Believing I should ever aid the Church—
But have I done it? He commends me now

From out his grave to this archbishoprick.

HERBERT. A dead man's dying wish should be of weight.

BECKET. *His* should. Come with me. Let me learn at full
The manner of his death, and all he said.

[*Exeunt* HERBERT *and* BECKET]

ELEANOR. Fitzurse, that chart with the red line — thou sawest it — her bower.

FITZURSE. Rosamund's?

ELEANOR. Ay — there lies the secret of her whereabouts, and the King gave it to his Chancellor.

FITZURSE. To this son of a London merchant — how your Grace must hate him!

ELEANOR. Hate him? as brave a soldier as Henry and a goodlier man: but thou — dost thou love this Chancellor, that thou hast sworn a voluntary allegiance to him?

FITZURSE. Not for my love toward him, but because he had the love of the King. How should a baron love a beggar on horseback, with the retinue of three kings behind him, outroyalling royalty? Besides, he holp the King to break down our castles, for the which I hate him.

ELEANOR. For the which I honour him. Statesman not Churchman he. A great and sound policy that: I could embrace him for it: you could not see the King for the kinglings.

FITZURSE. Ay, but he speaks to a noble as tho' he were a churl, and to a churl as if he were a noble.

ELEANOR. Pride of the plebeian!

FITZURSE. And this plebeian like to be Archbishop!

ELEANOR. True, and I have an inherited loathing of these black sheep of the Papacy. Archbishop? I can see further into a man than our hot-headed Henry, and if there ever come feud between Church and Crown, and I do not then charm this secret out of our loyal Thomas, I am not Eleanor.

FITZURSE. Last night I followed a woman in the city here. Her face was veiled, but the back methought was Rosamund — his paramour, thy rival. I can feel for thee.

ELEANOR. Thou feel for me! — paramour — rival! King Louis had no paramours, and I loved him none the more. Henry had many, and I loved him none the less — now neither more nor less — not at all; the cup's empty. I would she were but his paramour, for men tire of their fancies; but I fear this one fancy hath taken root, and borne blossom too, and she, whom the King loves indeed, is a power in the State. Rival! — ay, and when the King passes, there may come a crash and embroilment as in Stephen's time; and her children — canst thou not — that secret matter which would heat the King against thee. [*Whispers him and he starts*] Nay, that is safe with me as with thyself: but canst thou not — thou art drowned in debt — thou shalt have our love, our silence, and our gold — canst thou not — if thou light upon her — free me from her?

FITZURSE. Well, Madam, I have loved her in my time.

ELEANOR. No, my bear, thou hast not. My Courts of Love would have held thee guiltless of love — the fine attractions and repulses, the delicacies, the subtleties.

FITZURSE. Madam, I loved according to the main purpose and intent of nature.

ELEANOR. I warrant thee! thou wouldst hug thy Cupid till his ribs cracked — enough of this. Follow me this Rosamund day and night, whithersoever she goes; track her, if thou canst, even into the King's lodging, that I may [*clenches her fist*] — may at least have my cry against him and her, — and thou in thy way shouldst be jealous of the King, for thou in thy way didst once, what shall I call it, affect her thine own self.

FITZURSE. Ay, but the young colt winced and whinnied and flung up her heels; and then the King came honeying about her, and this Becket, her father's friend, like enough staved us from her.

ELEANOR. Us!

FITZURSE. Yea, by the Blessed Virgin! There were more than I buzzing round the blossom — De Tracy — even that flint De Brito.

ELEANOR. Carry her off among you; run in upon her and devour her, one and all of you; make her as hateful to herself and to the King, as she is to me.

FITZURSE. I and all would be glad to wreak our spite on the rosefaced minion of the King, and bring her to the level of the dust, so that the King —

ELEANOR. Let her eat it like the serpent, and be driven out of her paradise.

ACT I

SCENE FIRST. — BECKET'S *House in London. Chamber barely furnished.* [BECKET *unrobing.* HERBERT OF BOSHAM *and* SERVANT]

SERVANT. Shall I not help your lordship to your rest?

BECKET. Friend, am I so much better than thyself
That thou shouldst help me? Thou art wearied out
With this day's work, get thee to thine own bed.
Leave me with Herbert, friend.

[*Exit* SERVANT]

Help me off, Herbert, with this — and this.

HERBERT. Was not the people's blessing as we past
Heart-comfort and a balsam to thy blood?

BECKET. The people know their Church a tower of strength,
A bulwark against Throne and Baronage.
Too heavy for me, this; off with it, Herbert!

HERBERT. Is it so much heavier than thy Chancellor's robe?

BECKET. No; but the Chancellor's and the Archbishop's
Together more than mortal man can bear.

HERBERT. Not heavier than thine armour at Thoulouse?

BECKET. O Herbert, Herbert, in my chancellorship
I more than once have gone against the Church.

HERBERT. To please the King?

BECKET. Ay, and the King of kings,
Or justice; for it seem'd to me but just
The Church should pay her scutage like the lords.
But hast thou heard this cry of Gilbert Foliot
That I am not the man to be your Primate,
For Henry could not work a miracle —
Make an Archbishop of a soldier?

HERBERT. Ay,
For Gilbert Foliot held himself the man.

BECKET. Am I the man? My mother, ere she bore me,
Dream'd that twelve stars fell glittering out of heaven
Into her bosom.

HERBERT. Ay, the fire, the light,
The spirit of the twelve Apostles enter'd
Into thy making.

BECKET. And when I was a child,
The Virgin, in a vision of my sleep,
Gave me the golden keys of Paradise. Dream,
Or prophecy, that?

HERBERT. Well, dream and prophecy both.

BECKET. And when I was of Theobald's household, once —
The good old man would sometimes have his jest —
He took his mitre off, and set it on me,
And said, 'My young Archbishop — thou wouldst make
A stately Archbishop!' Jest or prophecy there?

HERBERT. Both, Thomas, both.

BECKET. Am I the man? That rang
Within my head last night, and when I slept
Methought I stood in Canterbury Minster,
And spake to the Lord God, and said, 'O Lord,
I have been a lover of wines, and delicate meats,
And secular splendours, and a favourer
Of players, and a courtier, and a feeder
Of dogs and hawks, and apes, and lions, and lynxes.
Am *I* the man?' And the Lord answer'd me,
'Thou art the man, and all the more the man.'
And then I ask'd again, 'O Lord my God,
Henry the King hath been my friend, my brother,
And mine uplifter in this world, and chosen me
For this thy great archbishoprick, believing
That I should go against the Church with him,
And I shall go against him with the Church,
And I have said no word of this to him:
Am *I* the man?' And the Lord answer'd me,
'Thou art the man, and all the more the man.'
And thereupon, methought, He drew toward me,
And smote me down upon the Minster floor.
I fell.

HERBERT. God make not thee, but thy foes, fall.

BECKET. I fell. Why fall? Why did He smite me? What?
Shall I fall off — to please the King once more?
Not fight — tho' somehow traitor to the King —
My truest and mine utmost for the Church?

HERBERT. Thou canst not fall that way. Let traitor be;
For how have fought thine utmost for the Church,
Save from the throne of thine archbishoprick?
And how been made Archbishop hadst thou told him,
'I mean to fight mine utmost for the Church,
Against the King'?

BECKET. But dost thou think the King
Forced mine election?

HERBERT. I do think the King
Was potent in the election, and why not?
Why should not Heaven have so inspired the King?
Be comforted. Thou art the man — be thou
A mightier Anselm.

BECKET. I do believe thee, then. I am the man.
And yet I seem appall'd — on such a sudden
At such an eagle-height I stand and see
The rift that runs between me and the King.
I served our Theobald well when I was with him;
I served King Henry well as Chancellor;
I am his no more, and I must serve the Church.
This Canterbury is only less than Rome,
And all my doubts I fling from me like dust,
Winnow and scatter all scruples to the wind,
And all the puissance of the warrior,
And all the wisdom of the Chancellor,
And all the heap'd experiences of life,
I cast upon the side of Canterbury —
Our holy mother Canterbury, who sits
With tatter'd robes. Laics and barons thro'
The random gifts of careless kings, have graspt
Her livings, her advowsons, granges, farms,
And goodly acres — we will make her whole;
Not one rood lost. And for these Royal customs,
These ancient Royal customs — they *are* Royal,
Not of the Church — and let them be anathema,
And all that speak for them anathema.

HERBERT. Thomas, thou art moved too much.

BECKET. O Herbert, here
I gash myself asunder from the King,
Tho' leaving each, a wound; mine own, a grief
To show the scar for ever — his, a hate
Not ever to be heal'd.

[*Enter* ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD, *flying from* SIR REGINALD FITZURSE. *Drops her veil*]

BECKET. Rosamund de Clifford!

ROSAMUND. Save me, father, hide me — they follow me — and I must not be known.

BECKET. Pass in with Herbert there.

[*Exeunt* ROSAMUND *and* HERBERT *by side door*]

[*Enter* FITZURSE]

FITZURSE. The Archbishop!

BECKET. Ay! what wouldst thou, Reginald?

FITZURSE. Why — why, my lord, I follow'd — follow'd one —

BECKET. And then what follows? Let me follow thee.

FITZURSE. It much imports me I should know her name.

BECKET. What her?

FITZURSE. The woman that I follow'd hither.

BECKET. Perhaps it may import her all as much
Not to be known.

FITZURSE. And what care I for that?
Come, come, my lord Archbishop; I saw that door
Close even now upon the woman.

BECKET. Well?

FITZURSE [*making for the door*]. Nay, let me pass, my lord, for I must know.

BECKET. Back, man!

FITZURSE. Then tell me who and what she is.

BECKET. Art thou so sure thou followedst anything?
Go home, and sleep thy wine off, for thine eyes
Glare stupid-wild with wine.

FITZURSE [*making to the door*]. I must and will.
I care not for thy new archbishoprick.

BECKET. Back, man, I tell thee! What!
Shall I forget my new archbishoprick
And smite thee with my crozier on the skull?
'Fore God, I am a mightier man than thou.

FITZURSE. It well befits thy new archbishoprick
To take the vagabond woman of the street
Into thine arms!

BECKET. O drunken ribaldry!
Out, beast! out, bear!

FITZURSE. I shall remember this.

BECKET. Do, and begone!

[*Exit* FITZURSE]

[*Going to the door, sees* DE TRACY]

Tracy, what dost thou here?

DE TRACY. My lord, I follow'd Reginald Fitzurse.

BECKET. Follow him out!

DE TRACY. I shall remember this
Discourtesy. [*Exit*]

BECKET. Do. These be those baron-brutes
That havock'd all the land in Stephen's day.
Rosamund de Clifford.

[*Re-enter* ROSAMUND *and* HERBERT]

ROSAMUND. Here am I.

BECKET. Why here?
We gave thee to the charge of John of Salisbury,
To pass thee to thy secret bower to-morrow.
Wast thou not told to keep thyself from sight?

ROSAMUND. Poor bird of passage! so I was; but, father,
They say that you are wise in winged things,
And know the ways of Nature. Bar the bird
From following the fled summer — a chink — he's out,
Gone! And there stole into the city a breath
Full of the meadows, and it minded me
Of the sweet woods of Clifford, and the walks
Where I could move at pleasure, and I thought
Lo! I must out or die.

BECKET. Or out *and* die.
And what hast thou to do with this Fitzurse?

ROSAMUND. Nothing. He sued my hand. I shook at him.
He found me once alone. Nay — nay I cannot
Tell you: my father drove him and his friends,
De Tracy and De Brito, from our castle.
I was but fourteen and an April then.
I heard him swear revenge.

BECKET. Why will you court it
By self-exposure? flutter out at night?
Make it so hard to save a moth from the fire?

ROSAMUND. I have saved many of 'em. You catch 'em, so,
Softly, and fling them out to the free air.
They burn themselves *within*-door.

BECKET. Our good John
Must speed you to your bower at once. The child
Is there already.

ROSAMUND. Yes — the child — the child —
O rare, a whole long day of open field.

BECKET. Ay, but you go disguised.

ROSAMUND. O rare again!
We'll baffle them, I warrant. What shall it be?
I'll go as a nun.

BECKET. No.

ROSAMUND. What, not good enough
Even to play at nun?

BECKET. Dan John with a nun,
That Map, and these new railers at the Church
May plaister his clean name with scurrilous rhymes!
No!
Go like a monk, cowling and clouding up
That fatal star, thy Beauty, from the squint
Of lust and glare of malice. Good night! good night!

ROSAMUND. Father, I am so tender to all hardness!
Nay, father, first thy blessing.

BECKET. Wedded?

ROSAMUND. Father!

BECKET. Well, well! I ask no more. Heaven bless thee! hence!

ROSAMUND. O holy father, when thou seest him next,
Commend me to thy friend.

BECKET. What friend?

ROSAMUND. The King.

BECKET. Herbert, take out a score of armed men
To guard this bird of passage to her cage;

And watch Fitzurse, and if he follow thee,
Make him thy prisoner. I am Chancellor yet.
[*Exeunt* HERBERT *and* ROSAMUND]
Poor soul! poor soul!
My friend, the King! . . . O thou Great Seal of England,
Given me by my dear friend the King of England —
We long have wrought together, thou and I —
Now must I send thee as a common friend
To tell the King, my friend, I am against him.
We are friends no more: he will say that, not I.
The worldly bond between us is dissolved,
Not yet the love: can I be under him
As Chancellor? as Archbishop over him?
Go therefore like a friend slighted by one
That hath climb'd up to nobler company.
Not slighted — all but moan'd for: thou must go.
I have not dishonour'd thee — I trust I have not;
Not mangled justice. May the hand that next
Inherits thee be but as true to thee
As mine hath been! O my dear friend, the King!
O brother! — I may come to martyrdom.
I am martyr in myself already. — Herbert!

HERBERT [*re-entering*]. My lord, the town is quiet, and the moon
Divides the whole long street with light and shade.
No footfall — no Fitzurse. We have seen her home.

BECKET. The hog hath tumbled himself into some corner,
Some ditch, to snore away his drunkenness
Into the sober headache, — Nature's moral
Against excess. Let the Great Seal be sent
Back to the King to-morrow.

HERBERT. Must that be?
The King may rend the bearer limb from limb.
Think on it again.

BECKET. Against the moral excess
No physical ache, but failure it may be
Of all we aim'd at. John of Salisbury
Hath often laid a cold hand on my heats,
And Herbert hath rebuked me even now.
I will be wise and wary, not the soldier
As Foliot swears it. — John, and out of breath!

[*Enter* JOHN OF SALISBURY]

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Thomas, thou wast not happy taking charge
Of this wild Rosamund to please the King,
Nor am I happy having charge of her —
The included Danaë has escaped again
Her tower, and her Acrisius — where to seek?
I have been about the city.

BECKET. Thou wilt find her
Back in her lodging. Go with her — at once —
To-night — my men will guard you to the gates.
Be sweet to her, she has many enemies.
Send the Great Seal by daybreak. Both, good night!

SCENE SECOND. — *Street in Northampton leading to the Castle.*

[ELEANOR'S RETAINERS *and* BECKET'S RETAINERS *fighting. Enter* ELEANOR *and* BECKET *from opposite streets*]

ELEANOR. Peace, fools!

BECKET. Peace, friends! what idle brawl is this?

RETAINER OF BECKET. They said — her Grace's people — thou wast found —
Liars! I shame to quote 'em — caught, my lord,
With a wanton in thy lodging — Hell requite 'em!

RETAINER OF ELEANOR. My liege, the Lord Fitzurse reported this
In passing the Castle even now.

RETAINER OF BECKET. And then they mock'd us and we fell upon 'em,
For we would live and die for thee, my lord,
However kings and queens may frown on thee.

BECKET. [*To his* RETAINERS] Go, go — no more of this!

ELEANOR. [*To her* RETAINERS] Away! — [*Exeunt* RETAINERS]
Fitzurse —

BECKET. Nay, let him be.

ELEANOR. No, no, my Lord Archbishop,
'Tis known you are midwinter to all women,
But often in your chancellorship you served
The follies of the King.

BECKET. No, not these follies!

ELEANOR. My lord, Fitzurse beheld her in your lodging.

BECKET. Whom?

ELEANOR. Well — you know — the minion, Rosamund.

BECKET. He had good eyes!

ELEANOR. Then hidden in the street
He watch'd her pass with John of Salisbury
And heard her cry 'Where is this bower of mine?'

BECKET. Good ears too!

ELEANOR. You are going to the Castle,
Will you subscribe the customs?

BECKET. I leave that,
Knowing how much you reverence Holy Church,
My liege, to your conjecture.

ELEANOR. I and mine —
And many a baron holds along with me —
Are not so much at feud with Holy Church
But we might take your side against the customs —
So that you grant me one slight favour.

BECKET. What?

ELEANOR. A sight of that same chart which Henry gave you
With the red line — 'her bower.'

BECKET. And to what end?

ELEANOR. That Church must scorn herself whose fearful Priest
Sits winking at the license of a king,
Altho' we grant when kings are dangerous
The Church must play into the hands of kings;
Look! I would move this wanton from his sight
And take the Church's danger on myself.

BECKET. For which she should be duly grateful.

ELEANOR. True!
Tho' she that binds the bond, herself should see
That kings are faithful to their marriage vow.

BECKET. Ay, Madam, and queens also.

ELEANOR. And queens also!
What is your drift?

BECKET. My drift is to the Castle,
Where I shall meet the Barons and my King. [*Exit*]

[DE BROC, DE TRACY, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE (*passing*)]

ELEANOR. To the Castle?

DE BROC. Ay!

ELEANOR. Stir up the King, the Lords!
Set all on fire against him!

DE BRITO. Ay, good Madam! [*Exeunt*]

ELEANOR. Fool! I will make thee hateful to thy King.
Churl! I will have thee frighted into France,
And I shall live to trample on thy grave.

SCENE THIRD.—*The Hall in Northampton Castle.*

[*On one side of the stage the doors of an inner Council-chamber, half-open. At the bottom, the great doors of the Hall.* ROGER ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, FOLIOT BISHOP OF LONDON, HILARY OF CHICHESTER, BISHOP OF HEREFORD, RICHARD DE HASTINGS (*Grand Prior of Templars*), PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA (*the Pope's Almoner*), *and others.* DE BROC, FITZURSE, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACY, *and other* BARONS *assembled — a table before them.* JOHN OF OXFORD, *President of the Council.*]

[*Enter* BECKET *and* HERBERT OF BOSHAM]

BECKET. Where is the King?

ROGER OF YORK. Gone hawking on the Nene,
His heart so gall'd with thine ingratitude,
He will not see thy face till thou hast sign'd
These ancient laws and customs of the realm.
Thy sending back the Great Seal madden'd him,
He all but pluck'd the bearer's eyes away.
Take heed, lest he destroy thee utterly.

BECKET. Then shalt thou step into my place and sign.

Roger of York. Didst thou not promise Henry to obey
These ancient laws and customs of the realm?

Becket. Saving the honour of my order — ay.
Customs, traditions, — clouds that come and go;
The customs of the Church are Peter's rock.

Roger of York. Saving thine order! But King Henry sware
That, saving his King's kingship, he would grant thee
The crown itself. Saving thine order, Thomas,
Is black and white at once, and comes to naught.
O bolster'd up with stubbornness and pride,
Wilt thou destroy the Church in fighting for it,
And bring us all to shame?

Becket. Roger of York,
When I and thou were youths in Theobald's house,
Twice did thy malice and thy calumnies
Exile me from the face of Theobald.
Now I am Canterbury and thou art York.

Roger of York. And is not York the peer of Canterbury?
Did not Great Gregory bid St. Austin here
Found two archbishopricks, London and York?

Becket. What came of that? The first archbishop fled,
And York lay barren for a hundred years.
Why, by this rule, Foliot may claim the pall
For London too.

Foliot. And with good reason too,
For London had a temple and a priest
When Canterbury hardly bore a name.

Becket. The pagan temple of a pagan Rome!
The heathen priesthood of a heathen creed!
Thou goest beyond thyself in petulancy!
Who made thee London? Who, but Canterbury?

John of Oxford. Peace, peace, my lords! these customs are no longer
As Canterbury calls them, wandering clouds,
But by the King's command are written down,
And by the King's command I, John of Oxford,
The President of this Council, read them.

Becket. Read!

John of Oxford [*reads*]. 'All causes of advowsons and presentations, whether between laymen or clerics, shall be tried in the King's court.'

Becket. But that I cannot sign: for that would drag
The cleric before the civil judgment-seat,
And on a matter wholly spiritual.

John of Oxford. 'If any cleric be accused of felony, the Church shall not protect him; but he shall answer to the summons of the King's court to be tried therein.'

Becket. And that I cannot sign.
Is not the Church the visible Lord on earth?
Shall hands that do create the Lord be bound
Behind the back like laymen-criminals?
The Lord be judged again by Pilate? No!

John of Oxford. 'When a bishoprick falls vacant, the King, till another be appointed, shall receive the revenues thereof.'

Becket. And that I cannot sign. Is the King's treasury
A fit place for the monies of the Church,
That be the patrimony of the poor?

John of Oxford. 'And when the vacancy is to be filled up, the King shall summon the chapter of that church to court, and the election shall be made in the Chapel Royal, with the consent of our lord the King, and by the advice of his Government.'

Becket. And that I cannot sign: for that would make
Our island-Church a schism from Christendom,
And weight down all free choice beneath the throne.

Foliot. And was thine own election so canonical,
Good father?

Becket. If it were not, Gilbert Foliot,
I mean to cross the sea to France, and lay
My crozier in the Holy Father's hands,
And bid him re-create me, Gilbert Foliot.

Foliot. Nay; by another of these customs thou
Wilt not be suffer'd so to cross the seas
Without the license of our lord the King.

Becket. That, too, I cannot sign.

[De Broc, De Brito, De Tracy, Fitzurse, De Morville, *start up — a clash of swords*]

Lords. Sign and obey!

Becket. My lords, is this a combat or a council?
Are ye my masters, or my lord the King?
Ye make this clashing for no love o' the customs
Or constitutions, or whate'er ye call them,
But that there be among you those that hold
Lands reft from Canterbury.

De Broc. And mean to keep them,
In spite of thee!

Lords [*shouting*]. Sign, and obey the crown!

Becket. The crown? Shall I do less for Canterbury
Than Henry for the crown? King Stephen gave
Many of the crown lands to those that helpt him;
So did Matilda, the King's mother. Mark,
When Henry came into his own again,
Then he took back not only Stephen's gifts,
But his own mother's, lest the crown should be
Shorn of ancestral splendour. This did Henry.
Shall I do less for mine own Canterbury?
And thou, De Broc, that holdest Saltwood Castle —

De Broc. And mean to hold it, or —

Becket. To have my life.

De Broc The King is quick to anger; if thou anger him,
We wait but the King's word to strike thee dead.

Becket. Strike, and I die the death of martyrdom;
Strike, and ye set these customs by my death
Ringing their own death-knell thro' all the realm.

Herbert. And I can tell you, lords, ye are all as like
To lodge a fear in Thomas Becket's heart
As find a hare's form in a lion's cave.

John of Oxford. Ay, sheathe your swords, ye will displease the King.

De Broc. Why down then thou! but an he come to Saltwood,
By God's death, thou shalt stick him like a calf! [*Sheathing his sword*]

Hilary. O my good lord, I do entreat thee — sign.
Save the King's honour here before his barons.
He hath sworn that thou shouldst sign, and now but shuns
The semblance of defeat; I have heard him say
He means no more; so if thou sign, my lord,
That were but as the shadow of an assent.

Becket. 'Twould seem too like the substance, if I sign'd.

Philip de Eleemosyna. My lord, thine ear! I have the ear of the Pope.
As thou hast honour for the Pope our master,
Have pity on him, sorely prest upon
By the fierce Emperor and his Antipope.
Thou knowest he was forced to fly to France;
He pray'd me to pray thee to pacify
Thy King; for if thou go against thy King,
Then must he likewise go against thy King,
And then thy King might join the Antipope,
And that would shake the Papacy as it stands.
Besides, thy King swore to our cardinals
He meant no harm nor damage to the Church.
Smooth thou his pride — thy signing is but form;
Nay, and should harm come of it, it is the Pope
Will be to blame — not thou. Over and over
He told me thou shouldst pacify the King,
Lest there be battle between Heaven and Earth,
And Earth should get the better — for the time.
Cannot the Pope absolve thee if thou sign?

Becket. Have I the orders of the Holy Father?

Philip de Eleemosyna. Orders, my lord — why, no; for what am I?
The secret whisper of the Holy Father.
Thou, that hast been a statesman, couldst thou always
Blurt thy free mind to the air?

Becket. If Rome be feeble, then should I be firm.

Philip. Take it not that way — balk not the Pope's will.

When he hath shaken off the Emperor,
He heads the Church against the King with thee.

RICHARD DE HASTINGS [*kneeling*]. Becket I am the oldest of the Templars;
I knew thy father; he would be mine age
Had he lived now; think of me as thy father!
Behold thy father kneeling to thee, Becket.
Submit; I promise thee on my salvation
That thou wilt hear no more o' the customs.

BECKET. What!
Hath Henry told thee? hast thou talk'd with him?

ANOTHER TEMPLAR [*kneeling*]. Father, I am the youngest of the Templars,
Look on me as I were thy bodily son,
For, like a son, I lift my hands to thee.

PHILIP. Wilt thou hold out for ever, Thomas Becket?
Dost thou not hear?

BECKET [*signs*]. Why — there then — there — I sign,
And swear to obey the customs.

FOLIOT. Is it thy will,
My lord Archbishop, that we too should sign?

BECKET. O ay, by that canonical obedience
Thou still hast owed thy father, Gilbert Foliot.

FOLIOT. Loyally and with good faith, my lord Archbishop?

BECKET. O ay, with all that loyalty and good faith
Thou still hast shown thy primate, Gilbert Foliot.

[BECKET *draws apart with* HERBERT]

Herbert, Herbert, have I betray'd the Church?
I'll have the paper back — blot out my name.

HERBERT. Too late, my lord: you see they are signing there.

BECKET. False to myself — it is the will of God
To break me, prove me nothing of myself!
This Almoner hath tasted Henry's gold.
The cardinals have finger'd Henry's gold.
And Rome is venal ev'n to rottenness.
I see it, I see it.
I am no soldier, as he said — at least
No leader. Herbert, till I hear from the Pope
I will suspend myself from all my functions.
If fast and prayer, the lacerating scourge —

FOLIOT [*from the table*]. My lord Archbishop, thou hast yet to seal.

BECKET. First, Foliot, let me see what I have sign'd.

[*Goes to the table*]

What, this! and this! — what! new and old together!
Seal? If a seraph shouted from the sun,
And bade me seal against the rights of the Church,
I would anathematise him. I will not seal. [*Exit with* HERBERT]

[*Enter* KING HENRY]

HENRY. Where's Thomas? hath he sign'd? show me the papers!
Sign'd and not seal'd! How's that?

JOHN OF OXFORD. He would not seal.
And when he sign'd, his face was stormy-red —
Shame, wrath, I know not what. He sat down there
And dropt it in his hands, and then a paleness,
Like the wan twilight after sunset, crept
Up even to the tonsure, and he groan'd,
'False to myself! It is the will of God!'

HENRY. God's will be what it will, the man shall seal,
Or I will seal his doom. My burgher's son —
Nay, if I cannot break him as the prelate,
I'll crush him as the subject. Send for him back. [*Sits on his throne*]
Barons and bishops of our realm of England,
After the nineteen winters of King Stephen —
A reign which was no reign, when none could sit
By his own hearth in peace; when murder common
As nature's death, like Egypt's plague, had fill'd
All things with blood; when every doorway blush'd,
Dash'd red with that unhallow'd passover;
When every baron ground his blade in blood;
The household dough was kneaded up with blood;

The mill wheel turn'd in blood; the wholesome plow
Lay rusting in the furrow's yellow weeds,
Till famine dwarft the race — I came, your King!
Nor dwelt alone, like a soft lord of the East,
In mine own hall, and sucking thro' fools' ears
The flatteries of corruption — went abroad
Thro' all my counties, spied my people's ways;
Yea, heard the churl against the baron — yea,
And did him justice; sat in mine own courts
Judging my judges, that had found a King
Who ranged confusions, made the twilight day.
And struck a shape from out the vague, and law
From madness. And the event — our fallows till'd,
Much corn, repeopled towns, a realm again.
So far my course, albeit not glassy-smooth,
Had prosper'd in the main, but suddenly
Jarr'd on this rock. A cleric violated
The daughter of his host, and murder'd him.
Bishops — York, London, Chichester, Westminster —
Ye haled this tonsured devil into your courts;
But since your canon will not let you take
Life for a life, ye but degraded him
Where I had hang'd him. What doth hard murder care
For degradation? and that made me muse,
Being bounden by my coronation oath
To do men justice. Look to it, your own selves!
Say that a cleric murder'd an archbishop,
What could ye do? Degrade, imprison him —
Not death for death.

JOHN OF OXFORD. But I, my liege, could swear,
To death for death.

HENRY. And, looking thro' my reign,
I found a hundred ghastly murders done
By men, the scum and offal of the Church;
Then, glancing thro' the story of this realm,
I came on certain wholesome usages,
Lost in desuetude, of my grandsire's day,
Good royal customs — had them written fair
For John of Oxford here to read to you.

JOHN OF OXFORD. And I can easily swear to these as being
The King's will and God's will and justice; yet
I could but read a part to-day, because —

FITZURSE. Because my lord of Canterbury —

DE TRACY. Ay,
This lord of Canterbury —

DE BRITO. As is his wont
Too much of late whene'er your royal rights
Are mooted in our councils —

FITZURSE. — made an uproar.

HENRY. And Becket had my bosom on all this;
If ever man by bonds of gratefulness —
I raised him from the puddle of the gutter,
I made him porcelain from the clay of the city —
Thought that I knew him, err'd thro' love of him,
Hoped, were he chosen archbishop, Church and Crown,
Two sisters gliding in an equal dance,
Two rivers gently flowing side by side —
But no!
The bird that moults sings the same song again,
The snake that sloughs comes out a snake again.
Snake — ay, but he that lookt a fangless one,
Issues a venomous adder.
For he, when having dofft the Chancellor's robe —
Flung the Great Seal of England in my face —
Claim'd some of our crown lands for Canterbury —
My comrade, boon companion, my co-reveller,
The master of his master, the King's king. —
God's eyes! I had meant to make him all but king.
Chancellor-Archbishop, he might well have sway'd
All England under Henry, the young King,

When I was hence. What did the traitor say?
False to himself, but ten-fold false to me!
The will of God — why, then it is my will —
Is he coming?

MESSENGER [*entering*]. With a crowd of worshippers,
And holds his cross before him thro' the crowd,
As one that puts himself in sanctuary.

HENRY. His cross!

ROGER OF YORK. His cross! I'll front him, cross to cross.

[*Exit* ROGER OF YORK]

HENRY. His cross! it is the traitor that imputes
Treachery to his King!
It is not safe for me to look upon him.
Away — with me!

[*Goes in with his* BARONS *to the Council-Chamber, the door of which is left open*]

[*Enter* BECKET, *holding his cross of silver before him. The* BISHOPS *come round him*]

HEREFORD. The King will not abide thee with thy cross.
Permit me, my good lord, to bear it for thee,
Being thy chaplain.

BECKET. No: it must protect me.

HERBERT. As once he bore the standard of the Angles,
So now he bears the standard of the angels.

FOLIOT. I am the Dean of the province: let me bear it.
Make not thy King a traitorous murderer.

BECKET. Did not your barons draw their swords against me?

[*Enter* ROGER OF YORK, *with his cross, advancing to* BECKET]

BECKET. Wherefore dost thou presume to bear thy cross,
Against the solemn ordinance from Rome,
Out of thy province?

ROGER OF YORK. Why dost thou presume,
Arm'd with thy cross, to come before the King?
If Canterbury bring his cross to court,
Let York bear his to mate with Canterbury.

FOLIOT [*seizing hold of* BECKET'S *cross*]. Nay, nay, my lord, thou must not brave the King.
Nay, let me have it. I will have it!

BECKET. Away!

[*Flinging him off*]

FOLIOT. *He* fasts, they say, this mitred Hercules!
He fast! is that an arm of fast? My lord,
Hadst thou not sign'd, I had gone along with thee;
But thou the shepherd hast betray'd the sheep,
And thou art perjured, and thou wilt not seal.
As Chancellor thou wast against the Church,
Now as Archbishop goest against the King;
For, like a fool, thou knowst no middle way.
Ay, ay! but art thou stronger than the King?

BECKET. Strong — not in mine own self, but Heaven; true
To either function, holding it; and thou
Fast, scourge thyself, and mortify thy flesh,
Not spirit — thou remainest Gilbert Foliot,
A worldly follower of the worldly strong.
I, bearing this great ensign, make it clear
Under what Prince I fight.

FOLIOT. My lord of York,
Let us go in to the Council, where our bishops
And our great lords will sit in judgment on him.

BECKET. Sons sit in judgment on their father! — then
The spire of Holy Church may prick the graves —
Her crypt among the stars. Sign? seal? I promised
The King to obey these customs, not yet written,
Saving mine order; true too, that when written
I sign'd them — being a fool, as Foliot call'd me.
I hold not by my signing. Get ye hence,
Tell what I say to the King.

[*Exeunt* HEREFORD, FOLIOT, *and other* BISHOPS]

ROGER OF YORK. The Church will hate thee. [*Exit*]

BECKET. Serve my best friend and make him my worst foe;

Fight for the Church, and set the Church against me!

HERBERT. To be honest is to set all knaves against thee.
Ah! Thomas, excommunicate them all!

HEREFORD [*re-entering*]. I cannot brook the turmoil thou hast raised.
I would, my lord Thomas of Canterbury,
Thou wert plain Thomas and not Canterbury,
Or that thou wouldst deliver Canterbury
To our King's hands again, and be at peace.

HILARY [*re-entering*]. For hath not thine ambition set the Church
This day between the hammer and the anvil —
Fealty to the King, obedience to thyself?

HERBERT. What say the bishops?

HILARY. Some have pleaded for him,
But the King rages — most are with the King;
And some are reeds, that one time sway to the current,
And to the wind another. But we hold
Thou art forsworn; and no forsworn Archbishop
Shall helm the Church. We therefore place ourselves
Under the shield and safeguard of the Pope,
And cite thee to appear before the Pope,
And answer thine accusers. . . . Art thou deaf?

BECKET. I hear you.

[*Clash of arms*]

HILARY. Dost thou hear those others?

BECKET. Ay!

ROGER OF YORK [*re-entering*]. The King's 'God's eyes!' come now so thick and fast,
We fear that he may reave thee of thine own.
Come on, come on! it is not fit for us
To see the proud Archbishop mutilated.
Say that he blind thee and tear out thy tongue.

BECKET. So be it. He begins at top with me:
They crucified St. Peter downward.

ROGER OF YORK. Nay,
But for their sake who stagger betwixt thine
Appeal, and Henry's anger, yield.

BECKET. Hence, Satan!

[*Exit* ROGER OF YORK]

FITZURSE [*re-entering*]. My lord, the King demands three hundred marks,
Due from his castles of Berkhamstead and Eye
When thou thereof wast warden.

BECKET. Tell the King
I spent thrice that in fortifying his castles.

DE TRACY [*re-entering*]. My lord, the King demands seven hundred marks,
Lent at the siege of Thoulouse by the King.

BECKET. I led seven hundred knights and fought his wars.

DE BRITO [*re-entering*]. My lord, the King demands five hundred marks,
Advanced thee at his instance by the Jews,
For which the King was bound security.

BECKET. I thought it was a gift; I thought it was a gift.

[*Enter* LORD LEICESTER, *followed by* BARONS *and* BISHOPS]

LEICESTER. My lord, I come unwillingly. The King
Demands a strict account of all those revenues
From all the vacant sees and abbacies,
Which came into thy hands when Chancellor.

BECKET. How much might that amount to, my lord Leicester?

LEICESTER. Some thirty — forty thousand silver marks.

BECKET. Are these your customs? O my good lord Leicester,
The King and I were brothers. All I had
I lavish'd for the glory of the King;
I shone from him, for him, his glory, his
Reflection: now the glory of the Church
Hath swallow'd up the glory of the King;
I am his no more, but hers. Grant me one day
To ponder these demands.

LEICESTER. Hear first thy sentence!
The King and all his lords —

BECKET. Son, first hear *me!*

LEICESTER. Nay, nay, canst thou, that holdest thine estates
In fee and barony of the King, decline
The judgment of the King?

BECKET. The King! I hold
Nothing in fee and barony of the King.
Whatever the Church owns — she holds it in
Free and perpetual alms, unsubject to
One earthly sceptre.

LEICESTER. Nay, but hear thy judgment.
The King and all his barons —

BECKET. Judgment! Barons!
Who but the bridegroom dares to judge the bride,
Or he the bridegroom may appoint? Not he
That is not of the house, but from the street
Stain'd with the mire thereof.
I had been so true
To Henry and mine office that the King
Would throne me in the great Archbishoprick:
And I, that knew mine own infirmity,
For the King's pleasure rather than God's cause
Took it upon me — err'd thro' love of him.
Now therefore God from me withdraws Himself,
And the King too.
What! forty thousand marks!
Why thou, the King, the Pope, the Saints, the world,
Know that when made Archbishop I was freed,
Before the Prince and chief Justiciary,
From every bond and debt and obligation
Incurr'd as Chancellor.
Hear me, son.
As gold
Outvalues dross, light darkness, Abel Cain,
The soul the body, and the Church the Throne,
I charge thee, upon pain of mine anathema,
That thou obey, not me, but God in me,
Rather than Henry. I refuse to stand
By the King's censure, make my cry to the Pope,
By whom I will be judged; refer myself,
The King, these customs, all the Church, to him,
And under his authority — I depart.
[*Going*]

[LEICESTER *looks at him doubtingly*]

Am I a prisoner?

LEICESTER. By St. Lazarus, no!
I am confounded by thee. Go in peace.

DE BROC. In peace now — but after. Take that for earnest.

[*Flings a bone at him from the rushes*]

DE BRITO, FITZURSE, DE TRACY, *and others* [*flinging wisps of rushes*]. Ay, go in peace, caitiff, caitiff! And that too, perjured prelate — and that, turncoat shaveling! There, there, there! traitor, traitor, traitor!

BECKET. Mannerless wolves!
[*Turning and facing them*]

HERBERT. Enough, my lord, enough!

BECKET. Barons of England and of Normandy,
When what ye shake at doth but seem to fly,
True test of coward, ye follow with a yell.
But I that threw the mightiest knight of France,
Sir Engelram de Trie, —

HERBERT. Enough, my lord.

BECKET. More than enough. I play the fool again.

[*Enter* HERALD]

HERALD. The King commands you, upon pain of death,
That none should wrong or injure your Archbishop.

FOLIOT. Deal gently with the young man Absalom.

[*Great doors of the Hall at the back open, and discover a crowd. They shout:*]

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!

SCENE FOURTH. — *Refectory of the Monastery at Northampton.*

[*A banquet on the Tables*]

[*Enter* BECKET. BECKET'S RETAINERS]

1ST RETAINER. Do thou speak first.

2ND RETAINER. Nay, thou! Nay, thou! Hast not thou drawn the short straw?

1ST RETAINER. My lord Archbishop, wilt thou permit us —

BECKET. To speak without stammering and like a free man? Ay.

1ST RETAINER. My lord, permit us then to leave thy service.

BECKET. When?

1ST RETAINER. Now.

BECKET. To-night?

1ST RETAINER. To-night, my lord.

BECKET. And why?

1ST RETAINER. My lord, we leave thee not without tears.

BECKET. Tears? Why not stay with me then?

1st Retainer. My lord, we cannot yield thee an answer altogether to thy satisfaction.

Becket. I warrant you, or your own either. Shall I find you one? The King hath frowned upon me.

1st Retainer. That is not altogether our answer, my lord.

Becket. No; yet all but all. Go, go! Ye have eaten of my dish and drunken of my cup for a dozen years.

1st Retainer. And so we have. We mean thee no wrong. Wilt thou not say, 'God bless you,' ere we go?

Becket. God bless you all! God redden your pale blood! But mine is human-red; and when ye shall hear it is poured out upon earth, and see it mounting to Heaven, my God bless you, that seems sweet to you now, will blast and blind you like a curse.

1st Retainer. We hope not, my lord. Our humblest thanks for your blessing. Farewell!

[*Exeunt* Retainers]

Becket. Farewell, friends! farewell, swallows! I wrong the bird; she leaves only the nest she built, they leave the builder. Why? Am I to be murdered to-night? [*Knocking at the door*]

Attendant. Here is a missive left at the gate by one from the castle.

Becket. Cornwall's hand or Leicester's: they write marvellously alike.

[*Reading*]

'Fly at once to France, to King Louis of France: there be those about our King who would have thy blood.'

Was not my lord of Leicester bidden to our supper?

Attendant. Ay, my lord, and divers other earls and barons. But the hour is past, and our brother, Master Cook, he makes moan that all be a-getting cold.

Becket. And I make my moan along with him. Cold after warm, winter after summer, and the golden leaves, these earls and barons, that clung to me, frosted off me by the first cold frown of the King. Cold, but look how the table steams, like a heathen altar; nay, like the altar at Jerusalem. Shall God's good gifts be wasted? None of them here! Call in the poor from the streets, and let them feast.

Herbert. That is the parable of our blessed Lord.

Becket. And why should not the parable of our blessed Lord be acted again? Call in the poor! The Church is ever at variance with the kings, and ever at one with the poor. I marked a group of lazars in the marketplace — half-rag, half-sore — beggars, poor rogues (Heaven bless 'em) who never saw nor dreamed of such a banquet. I will amaze them. Call them in, I say. They shall henceforward be my earls and barons — our lords and masters in Christ Jesus. [*Exit* Herbert]

If the King hold his purpose, I am myself a beggar. Forty thousand marks! forty thousand devils — and these craven bishops!

[*Enter a* Poor Man *with his dog*]

Man. My lord Archbishop, may I come in with my poor friend, my dog? The King's verdurer caught him a-hunting in the forest, and cut off his paws. The dog followed his calling, my lord. I ha' carried him ever so many miles in my arms, and he licks my face and moans and cries out against the King.

Becket. Better thy dog than thee. The King's courts would use thee worse than thy dog — they are too bloody. Were the Church king, it would be otherwise. Poor beast! poor beast! set him down. I will bind up his wounds with my napkin. Give him a bone, give him a bone! Who misuses a dog would misuse a child — they cannot speak for themselves. Past help! his paws are past help. God help him!

[*Enter the* Beggars (*and seat themselves at the Tables*). Becket *and* Herbert *wait upon them*]

1st Beggar. Swine, sheep, ox — here's a French supper. When thieves fall out, honest men —

2nd Beggar. Is the Archbishop a thief who gives thee thy supper?

1st Beggar. Well, then, how does it go? When honest men fall out, thieves — no, it can't be that.

2nd Beggar. Who stole the widow's one sitting hen o' Sunday, when she was at mass?

1st Beggar. Come, come! thou hadst thy share on her. Sitting hen! Our Lord Becket's our great sitting-hen cock, and we shouldn't ha' been sitting here if the barons and bishops hadn't been a-sitting on the Archbishop.

Becket. Ay, the princes sat in judgment against me, and the Lord hath prepared your table — *Sederunt principes, ederunt pauperes.*

A VOICE. Becket, beware of the knife!

BECKET. Who spoke?

3RD BEGGAR. Nobody, my lord. What's that, my lord?

BECKET. Venison.

3RD BEGGAR. Venison?

BECKET. Buck; deer, as you call it.

3RD BEGGAR. King's meat! By the Lord, won't we pray for your lordship!

BECKET. And, my children, your prayers will do more for me in the day of peril that dawns darkly and drearily over the house of God — yea, and in the day of judgment also, than the swords of the craven sycophants would have done had they remained true to me whose bread they have partaken. I must leave you to your banquet. Feed, feast, and be merry. Herbert, for the sake of the Church itself, if not for my own, I must fly to France to-night. Come with me.

[*Exit with* HERBERT]

3RD BEGGAR. Here — all of you — my lord's health. [*They drink*] Well — if that isn't goodly wine —

1ST BEGGAR. Then there isn't a goodly wench to serve him with it: they were fighting for her to-day in the street.

3RD BEGGAR. Peace!

1ST BEGGAR. The black sheep baaed to the miller's ewe-lamb,
The miller's away for to-night.
Black sheep, quoth she, too black a sin for me.
And what said the black sheep, my masters?
We can make a black sin white.

3RD BEGGAR. Peace!

1ST BEGGAR. 'Ewe lamb, ewe lamb, I am here by the dam.'
But the miller came home that night,
And so dusted his back with the meal in his sack,
That he made the black sheep white.

3RD BEGGAR. Be we not of the family? be we not a-supping with the head of the family? be we not in my lord's own refractory? Out from among us; thou art our black sheep.

[*Enter the four* KNIGHTS]

FITZURSE. Sheep, said he? And sheep without the shepherd, too. Where is my lord Archbishop? Thou the lustiest and lousiest of this Cain's brotherhood, answer.

3RD BEGGAR. With Cain's answer, my lord. Am I his keeper? Thou shouldst call him Cain, not me.

FITZURSE. So I do, for he would murder his brother the State.

3RD BEGGAR [*rising and advancing*]. No, my lord; but because the Lord hath set his mark upon him that no man should murder him.

FITZURSE. Where is he? where is he?

3RD BEGGAR. With Cain belike, in the land of Nod, or in the land of France for aught I know.

FITZURSE. France! Ha! De Morville, Tracy, Brito — fled is he? Cross swords all of you! swear to follow him! Remember the Queen!

[*The four* KNIGHTS *cross their swords*]

DE BRITO. They mock us; he is here.

[*All the* BEGGARS *rise and advance upon them*]

FITZURSE. Come, you filthy knaves, let us pass.

3RD BEGGAR. Nay, my lord, let *us* pass. We be a-going home after our supper in all humbleness, my lord; for the Archbishop loves humbleness, my lord; and though we be fifty to four, we daren't fight you with our crutches, my lord. There now, if thou hast not laid hands upon me! and my fellows know that I am all one scale like a fish. I pray God I haven't given thee my leprosy, my lord.

[FITZURSE *shrinks from him and another presses upon* DE BRITO]

DE BRITO. Away, dog!

4TH BEGGAR. And I was bit by a mad dog o' Friday, an' I be half dog already by this token, that tho' I can drink wine I cannot bide water, my lord; and I want to bite, I want to bite, and they do say the very breath catches.

DE BRITO. Insolent clown! Shall I smite him with the edge of the sword?

DE MORVILLE. No, nor with the flat of it either. Smite the shepherd and the sheep are scattered. Smite the sheep and the shepherd will excommunicate thee.

DE BRITO. Yet my fingers itch to beat him into nothing.

5TH BEGGAR. So do mine, my lord. I was born with it, and sulphur won't bring it out o' me. But for all that the Archbishop washed my feet o' Tuesday. He likes it, my lord.

6TH BEGGAR. And see here, my lord, this rag fro' the gangrene i' my leg. It's humbling — it smells o' human

natur'. Wilt thou smell it, my lord? for the Archbishop likes the smell on it, my lord; for I be his lord and master i' Christ, my lord.

De Morville. Faugh! we shall all be poisoned. Let us go.

[*They draw back*, Beggars *following*]

7th Beggar. My lord, I ha' three sisters a-dying at home o' the sweating sickness. They be dead while I be a-supping.

8th Beggar. And I ha' nine darters i' the spital that be dead ten times o'er i' one day wi' the putrid fever; and I bring the taint on it along wi' me, for the Archbishop likes it, my lord.

[*Pressing upon the* Knights *till they disappear thro' the door*]

3rd Beggar. Crutches, and itches, and leprosies, and ulcers, and gangrenes, and running sores, praise ye the Lord, for to-night ye have saved our Archbishop!

1st Beggar. I'll go back again. I hain't half done yet.

Herbert of Bosham [*entering*]. My friends, the Archbishop bids you good night. He hath retired to rest, and being in great jeopardy of his life, he hath made his bed between the altars, from whence he sends me to bid you this night pray for him who hath fed you in the wilderness.

3rd Beggar. So we will — so we will, I warrant thee. Becket shall be king, and the Holy Father shall be king, and the world shall live by the King's venison and the bread o' the Lord, and there shall be no more poor for ever. Hurrah! Vive le Roy! That's the English of it.

ACT II

Scene First. — Rosamund's *Bower.*

A Garden of Flowers. In the midst a bank of wild-flowers with a bench before it.

Voices heard singing among the trees.

Duet

1. Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear in the pine overhead?
2. No; but the voice of the deep as it hollows the cliffs of the land.
1. Is there a voice coming up with the voice of the deep from the strand,
   One coming up with a song in the flush of the glimmering red?
2. Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.
1. Love that can shape or can shatter a life till the life shall have fled?
2. Nay, let us welcome him, Love that can lift up a life from the dead.
1. Keep him away from the lone little isle. Let us be, let us be.
2. Nay, let him make it his own, let him reign in it — he, it is he,
   Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.

[*Enter* Henry *and* Rosamund]

Rosamund. Be friends with him again — I do beseech thee.

Henry. With Becket? I have but one hour with thee —
Sceptre and crozier clashing, and the mitre
Grappling the crown — and when I flee from this
For a gasp of freer air, a breathing-while
To rest upon thy bosom and forget him —
Why thou, my bird, thou pipest Becket, Becket —
Yea, thou my golden dream of Love's own bower,
Must be the nightmare breaking on my peace
With 'Becket.'

Rosamund. O my life's life, not to smile
Is all but death to me. My sun, no cloud!
Let there not be one frown in this one hour.
Out of the many thine, let this be mine!
Look rather thou all-royal as when first
I met thee.

Henry. Where was that?

Rosamund. Forgetting that
Forgets me too.

Henry. Nay, I remember it well.
There on the moors.

Rosamund. And in a narrow path.
A plover flew before thee. Then I saw
Thy high black steed among the flaming furze,
Like sudden night in the main glare of day.
And from that height something was said to me
I knew not what.

HENRY. I ask'd the way.
ROSAMUND. I think so.
So I lost mine.
HENRY. Thou wast too shamed to answer.
ROSAMUND. Too scared — so young!
HENRY. The rosebud of my rose! —
Well, well, no more of *him* — I have sent his folk,
His kin, all his belongings, overseas,
Age, orphans, and babe-breasting mothers — all
By hundreds to him — there to beg, starve, die —
So that the fool King Louis feed them not.
The man shall feel that I can strike him yet.
ROSAMUND. Babes, orphans, mothers! is that royal, Sire?
HENRY. And I have been as royal with the Church.
He shelter'd in the Abbey of Pontigny.
There wore his time studying the canon law
To work it against me. But since he cursed
My friends at Veselay, I have let them know,
That if they keep him longer as their guest,
I scatter all their cowls to all the hells.
ROSAMUND. And is that altogether royal?
HENRY. Traitress!
ROSAMUND. A faithful traitress to thy royal fame.
HENRY. Fame! what care I for fame? Spite, ignorance, envy,
Yea, honesty too, paint her what way they will.
Fame of to-day is infamy to-morrow;
Infamy of to-day is fame to-morrow;
And round and round again. What matters? Royal —
I mean to leave the royalty of my crown
Unlessen'd to mine heirs.
ROSAMUND. Still — thy fame too:
I say that should be royal.
HENRY. And I say,
I care not for thy saying.
ROSAMUND. And I say,
I care not for *thy* saying. A greater King
Than thou art, Love, who cares not for the word,
Makes 'care not' — care. There have I spoken true?
HENRY. Care dwell with me for ever, when I cease
To care for thee as ever!
ROSAMUND. No need! no need! . . .
There is a bench. Come, wilt thou sit? . . . My bank
Of wild-flowers. [*He sits*] At thy feet!
[*She sits at his feet*]
HENRY. I bade them clear
A royal pleasaunce for thee, in the wood,
Not leave these countryfolk at court.
ROSAMUND. I brought them
In from the wood, and set them here. I love them
More than the garden flowers, that seem at most
Sweet guests, or foreign cousins, not half speaking
The language of the land. I love *them* too,
Yes. But, my liege, I am sure, of all the roses —
Shame fall on those who gave it a dog's name —
This wild one [*picking a briar-rose*] — nay, I shall not prick myself —
Is sweetest. Do but smell!
HENRY. Thou rose of the world!
Thou rose of all the roses! [*Muttering*]
I am not worthy of her — this beast-body
That God has plunged my soul in — I, that taking
The Fiend's advantage of a throne, so long
Have wander'd among women, — a foul stream
Thro' fever-breeding levels, — at her side,
Among these happy dales, run clearer, drop
The mud I carried, like yon brook, and glass
The faithful face of heaven —
[*Looking at her, and unconsciously aloud*]
— thine! thine!
ROSAMUND. I know it.
HENRY [*muttering*]. Not hers. We have but one bond, her hate of Becket.
ROSAMUND [*half hearing*]. Nay! nay! what art thou muttering? *I* hate Becket?
HENRY [*muttering*]. A sane and natural loathing for a soul
Purer, and truer and nobler than herself;
And mine a bitterer illegitimate hate,
A bastard hate born of a former love.
ROSAMUND. My fault to name him! O let the hand of one
To whom thy voice is all her music, stay it

But for a breath.
[*Puts her hand before his lips*]
Speak only of thy love.
Why there — like some loud beggar at thy gate —
The happy boldness of this hand hath won it
Love's alms, thy kiss [*looking at her hand*] — Sacred! I'll kiss it too.
[*Kissing it*]
There! wherefore dost thou so peruse it? Nay,
There may be crosses in my line of life.

HENRY. Not half *her* hand — no hand to mate with *her*,
If it should come to that.

ROSAMUND. With her? with whom?

HENRY. Life on the hand is naked gipsy-stuff;
Life on the face, the brows — clear innocence!
Vein'd marble — not a furrow yet — and hers [*Muttering*]
Crost and recrost, a venomous spider's web —

ROSAMUND [*springing up*]. Out of the cloud, my Sun — out of the eclipse
Narrowing my golden hour!

HENRY. O Rosamund,
I would be true — would tell thee all — and something
I had to say — I love thee none the less —
Which will so vex thee.

ROSAMUND. Something against *me?*

HENRY. No, no, against myself.

ROSAMUND. I will not hear it.
Come, come, mine hour! I bargain for mine hour.
I'll call thee little Geoffrey.

HENRY. Call him!

ROSAMUND. Geoffrey!

[*Enter* GEOFFREY]

HENRY. How the boy grows!

ROSAMUND. Ay, and his brows are thine;
The mouth is only Clifford, my dear father.

GEOFFREY. My liege, what hast thou brought me?

HENRY. Venal imp!
What say'st thou to the Chancellorship of England?

GEOFFREY. O yes, my liege.

HENRY. 'O yes, my liege!' He speaks
As if it were a cake of gingerbread.
Dost thou know, my boy, what it is to be Chancellor of England?

GEOFFREY. Something good, or thou wouldst not give it me.

HENRY. It is, my boy, to side with the King when Chancellor, and then to be made Archbishop and go against the King who made him, and turn the world upside down.

GEOFFREY. I won't have it then. Nay, but give it me, and I promise thee not to turn the world upside down.

HENRY [*giving him a ball*]. Here is a ball, my boy, thy world, to turn anyway and play with as thou wilt — which is more than I can do with mine. Go try it, play. [*Exit* GEOFFREY]
A pretty lusty boy.

ROSAMUND. So like to thee;
Like to be liker.

HENRY. Not in my chin, I hope!
That threatens double.

ROSAMUND. Thou art manlike perfect.

HENRY. Ay, ay, no doubt; and were I humpt behind,
Thou'dst say as much — the goodly way of women
Who love, for which I love them. May God grant
No ill befall or him or thee when I
Am gone.

ROSAMUND. Is *he* thy enemy?

HENRY. He? who? ay!

ROSAMUND. Thine enemy knows the secret of my bower.

HENRY. And I could tear him asunder with wild horses
Before he would betray it. Nay — no fear!
More like is he to excommunicate me.

ROSAMUND. And I would creep, crawl over knife-edge flint
Barefoot, a hundred leagues, to stay his hand
Before he flash'd the bolt.

HENRY. And when he flash'd it
Shrink from me, like a daughter of the Church.

ROSAMUND. Ay, but he will not.

HENRY. Ay! but if he did?

ROSAMUND. O then! O then! I almost fear to say
That my poor heretic heart would excommunicate
His excommunication, clinging to thee
Closer than ever.

HENRY [*raising* ROSAMUND *and kissing her*]. My brave-hearted Rose!
Hath he ever been to see thee?

ROSAMUND. Here? not he.
And it is so lonely here — no confessor.

HENRY. Thou shalt confess all thy sweet sins to me.

ROSAMUND. Besides, we came away in such a heat,
I brought not ev'n my crucifix.

HENRY. Take this.

[*Giving her the Crucifix which* ELEANOR *gave him*]

ROSAMUND. O beautiful! May I have it as mine, till mine
Be mine again?

HENRY [*throwing it round her neck*]. Thine — as I am — till death!

ROSAMUND. Death? no! I'll have it with me in my shroud,
And wake with it, and show it to all the Saints.

HENRY. Nay — I must go; but when thou layest thy lip
To this, remembering One who died for thee,
Remember also one who lives for thee
Out there in France; for I must hence to brave
The Pope, King Louis, and this turbulent priest.

ROSAMUND [*kneeling*]. O by thy love for me, all mine for thee,
Fling not thy soul into the flames of hell:
I kneel to thee — be friends with him again.

HENRY. Look, look! if little Geoffrey have not tost
His ball into the brook! makes after it too
To find it. Why, the child will drown himself.

ROSAMUND. Geoffrey! Geoffrey! [*Exeunt*]

SCENE SECOND. — *Montmirail.*

["*The Meeting of the Kings.*" JOHN OF OXFORD *and* HENRY. *Crowd in the distance*]

JOHN OF OXFORD. You have not crown'd young Henry yet, my liege?

HENRY. Crown'd! by God's eyes, we will not have him crown'd.
I spoke of late to the boy, he answer'd me,
As if he wore the crown already — No,
We will not have him crown'd.
'Tis true what Becket told me, that the mother
Would make him play his kingship against mine.

JOHN OF OXFORD. Not have him crown'd?

HENRY. Not now — not yet! and Becket —
Becket should crown him were he crown'd at all:
But, since we would be lord of our own manor,
This Canterbury, like a wounded deer,
Has fled our presence and our feeding-grounds.

JOHN OF OXFORD. Cannot a smooth tongue lick him whole again
To serve your will?

HENRY. He hates my will, not me.

JOHN OF OXFORD. There's York, my liege.

HENRY. But England scarce would hold
Young Henry king, if only crown'd by York,
And that would stilt up York to twice himself.
There is a movement yonder in the crowd —
See if our pious — what shall I call him, John? —
Husband-in-law, our smooth-shorn suzerain,
Be yet within the field.

JOHN OF OXFORD. I will. [*Exit*]

HENRY. Ay! Ay!
Mince and go back! his politic Holiness
Hath all but climb'd the Roman perch again,
And we shall hear him presently with clapt wing
Crow over Barbarossa — at last tongue-free
To blast my realms with excommunication
And interdict. I must patch up a peace —
A piece in this long-tugged-at, threadbare-worn
Quarrel of Crown and Church — to rend again.
His Holiness cannot steer straight thro' shoals,
Nor I. The citizen's heir hath conquer'd me
For the moment. So we make our peace with him.

[*Enter* LOUIS]

Brother of France, what shall be done with Becket?

LOUIS. The holy Thomas! Brother, you have traffick'd
Between the Emperor and the Pope, between

The Pope and Antipope — a perilous game
For men to play with God.
HENRY. Ay, ay, good brother,
They call you the Monk-King.
LOUIS. Who calls me? she
That was my wife, now yours? You have her Duchy,
The point you aim'd at, and pray God she prove
True wife to you. You have had the better of us
In secular matters.
HENRY. Come, confess, good brother,
You did your best or worst to keep her Duchy.
Only the golden Leopard printed in it
Such hold-fast claws that you perforce again
Shrank into France. Tut, tut! did we convene
This conference but to babble of our wives?
They are plagues enough in-door.
LOUIS. We fought in the East,
And felt the sun of Antioch scald our mail,
And push'd our lances into Saracen hearts.
We never hounded on the State at home
To spoil the Church.
HENRY. How should you see this rightly?
LOUIS. Well, well, no more! I am proud of my 'Monk-King,'
Whoever named me; and, brother, Holy Church
May rock, but will not wreck, nor our Archbishop
Stagger on the slope decks for any rough sea
Blown by the breath of kings. We do forgive you
For aught you wrought against us.
[HENRY *holds up his hand*]
Nay, I pray you,
Do not defend yourself. You will do much
To rake out all old dying heats, if you
At my requesting, will but look into
The wrongs you did him, and restore his kin,
Reseat him on his throne of Canterbury,
Be, both, the friends you were.
HENRY. The friends we were!
Co-mates we were, and had our sport together,
Co-kings we were, and made the laws together.
The world had never seen the like before.
You are too cold to know the fashion of it.
Well, well, we will be gentle with him, gracious —
Most gracious.

[*Enter* BECKET, *after him*, JOHN OF OXFORD, ROGER OF YORK, GILBERT FOLIOT, DE BROC, FITZURSE, *etc.*]

Only that the rift he made
May close between us, here I am wholly king,
The word should come from him.
BECKET [*kneeling*]. Then, my dear liege,
I here deliver all this controversy
Into your royal hands.
HENRY. Ah, Thomas, Thomas,
Thou art thyself again, Thomas again.
BECKET [*rising*]. Saving God's honour!
HENRY. Out upon thee, man!
Saving the Devil's honour, his yes and no.
Knights, bishops, earls, this London spawn — by Mahound,
I had sooner have been born a Mussulman —
Less clashing with their priests —
I am half-way down the slope — will no man stay me?
I dash myself to pieces — I stay myself —
Puff — it is gone. You, Master Becket, you
That owe to me your power over me —
Nay, nay —
Brother of France, you have taken, cherish'd him
Who thief-like fled from his own church by night,
No man pursuing. I would have had him back.
Take heed he do not turn and rend you too:
For whatsoever may displease him — that
Is clean against God's honour — a shift, a trick
Whereby to challenge, face me out of all
My regal rights. Yet, yet — that none may dream
I go against God's honour — ay, or himself
In any reason, choose
A hundred of the wisest heads from England,
A hundred, too, from Normandy and Anjou:
Let these decide on what was customary

In olden days, and all the Church of France
Decide on their decision, I am content.
More, what the mightiest and the holiest
Of all his predecessors may have done
Ev'n to the least and meanest of my own,
Let him do the same to me — I am content.

LOUIS. Ay, ay! the King humbles himself enough.

BECKET. [*Aside*] Words! he will wriggle out of them like an eel
When the time serves. [*Aloud*] My lieges and my lords,
The thanks of Holy Church are due to those
That went before us for their work, which we
Inheriting reap an easier harvest. Yet —

LOUIS. My lord, will you be greater than the Saints,
More than St. Peter? whom — what is it you doubt?
Behold your peace at hand.

BECKET. I say that those
Who went before us did not wholly clear
The deadly growths of earth, which Hell's own heat
So dwelt on that they rose and darken'd Heaven.
Yet they did much. Would God they had torn up all
By the hard root, which shoots again; our trial
Had so been less; but, seeing they were men
Defective or excessive, must we follow
All that they overdid or underdid?
Nay, if they were defective as St. Peter
Denying Christ, who yet defied the tyrant,
We hold by his defiance, not his defect.
O good son Louis, do not counsel me,
No, to suppress God's honour for the sake
Of any king that breathes. No, God forbid!

HENRY. No! God forbid! and turn me Mussulman!
No God but one, and Mahound is his prophet.
But for your Christian, look you, you shall have
None other God but me — me, Thomas, son
Of Gilbert Becket, London merchant. Out! [*Exit*
I hear no more.

LOUIS. Our brother's anger puts him,
Poor man, beside himself — not wise. My lord,
We have claspt your cause, believing that our brother
Had wrong'd you; but this day he proffer'd peace.
You will have war; and tho' we grant the Church
King over this world's kings, yet, my good lord,
We that are kings are something in this world,
And so we pray you, draw yourself from under
The wings of France. We shelter you no more. [*Exit*]

JOHN OF OXFORD. I am glad that France hath scouted him at last:
I told the Pope what manner of man he was. [*Exit*]

ROGER OF YORK. Yea, since he flouts the will of either realm,
Let either cast him away like a dead dog! [*Exit*]

FOLIOT. Yea, let a stranger spoil his heritage,
And let another take his bishoprick! [*Exit*]

DE BROC. Our castle, my lord, belongs to Canterbury.
I pray you come and take it. [*Exit*]

FITZURSE. When you will. [*Exit*]

BECKET. Cursed be John of Oxford, Roger of York,
And Gilbert Foliot! cursed those De Brocs
That hold our Saltwood Castle from our see!
Cursed Fitzurse, and all the rest of them
That sow this hate between my lord and me!

VOICES FROM THE CROWD. Blessed be the Lord Archbishop, who hath withstood two Kings to their faces for the honour of God.

BECKET. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, praise!
I thank you, sons; when kings but hold by crowns,
The crowd that hungers for a crown in Heaven
Is my true king.

HERBERT. Thy true King bade thee be
A fisher of men; thou hast them in thy net.

BECKET. I am too like the King here; both of us

Too headlong for our office. Better have been
A fisherman at Bosham, my good Herbert,
Thy birthplace — the sea-creek — the petty rill
That falls into it — the green field — the gray church —
The simple lobster-basket, and the mesh —
The more or less of daily labour done —
The pretty gaping bills in the home-nest
Piping for bread — the daily want supplied —
The daily pleasure to supply it.

HERBERT. Ah, Thomas,
You had not borne it, no, not for a day.

BECKET. Well, maybe, no.

HERBERT. But bear with Walter Map,
For here he comes to comment on the time.

[*Enter* WALTER MAP]

WALTER MAP. Pity, my lord, that you have quenched the warmth of France toward you, tho' His Holiness, after much smouldering and smoking, be kindled again upon your quarter.

BECKET. Ay, if he do not end in smoke again.

WALTER MAP. My lord, the fire, when first kindled, said to the smoke, 'Go up, my son, straight to Heaven.' And the smoke said, 'I go;' but anon the North-east took and turned him South-west, then the South-west turned him North-east, and so of the other winds; but it was in him to go up straight if the time had been quieter. Your lordship affects the unwavering perpendicular; but His Holiness, pushed one way by the Empire and another by England, if he move at all, Heaven stay him, is fain to diagonalise.

HERBERT. Diagonalise! thou art a word-monger.
Our Thomas never will diagonalise.
Thou art a jester and a verse-maker.
Diagonalise!

WALTER MAP. Is the world any the worse for my verses if the Latin rhymes be rolled out from a full mouth? or any harm done to the people if my jest be in defence of the Truth?

BECKET. Ay, if the jest be so done that the people
Delight to wallow in the grossness of it,
Till Truth herself be shamed of her defender.
Non defensoribus istis, Walter Map.

WALTER MAP. Is that my case? so if the city be sick, and I cannot call the kennel sweet, your lordship would suspend me from verse-writing, as you suspended yourself after sub-writing to the customs.

BECKET. I pray God pardon mine infirmity.

WALTER MAP. Nay, my lord, take heart; for tho' you suspended yourself, the Pope let you down again; and tho' you suspend Foliot or another, the Pope will not leave them in suspense, for the Pope himself is always in suspense, like Mahound's coffin hung between heaven and earth — always in suspense, like the scales, till the weight of Germany or the gold of England brings one of them down to the dust — always in suspense, like the tail of the horologe — to and fro — tick-tack — we make the time, we keep the time, ay, and we serve the time; for I have heard say that if you boxed the Pope's ears with a purse, you might stagger him, but he would pocket the purse. No saying of mine — Jocelyn of Salisbury. But the King hath bought half the College of Redhats. He warmed to you to-day, and you have chilled him again. Yet you both love God. Agree with him quickly again, even for the sake of the Church. My one grain of good counsel which you will not swallow. I hate a split between old friendships as I hate the dirty gap in the face of a Cistercian monk, that will swallow anything. Farewell. [*Exit*]

BECKET. Map scoffs at Rome. I all but hold with Map.
Save for myself no Rome were left in England,
All had been his. Why should this Rome, this Rome,
Still choose Barabbas rather than the Christ,
Absolve the left-hand thief and damn the right?
Take fees of tyranny, wink at sacrilege,
Which even Peter had not dared? condemn
The blameless exile? —

HERBERT. Thee, thou holy Thomas!
I would that thou hadst been the Holy Father.

BECKET. I would have done my most to keep Rome holy,
I would have made Rome know she still is Rome —
Who stands aghast at her eternal self

And shakes at mortal kings — her vacillation,
Avarice, craft — O God, how many an innocent
Has left his bones upon the way to Rome
Unwept, uncared for. Yea — on mine own self
The King had had no power except for Rome.
'Tis not the King who is guilty of mine exile,
But Rome, Rome, Rome!

HERBERT. My lord, I see this Louis
Returning, ah! to drive thee from his realm.

BECKET. He said as much before. Thou art no prophet,
Nor yet a prophet's son.

HERBERT. Whatever he say,
Deny not thou God's honour for a king.
The King looks troubled.

[*Re-enter* KING LOUIS]

LOUIS. My dear lord Archbishop,
I learn but now that those poor Poitevins,
That in thy cause were stirr'd against King Henry,
Have been, despite his kingly promise given
To our own self of pardon, evilly used
And put to pain. I have lost all trust in him.
The Church alone hath eyes — and now I see
That I was blind — suffer the phrase — surrendering
God's honour to the pleasure of a man.
Forgive me and absolve me, holy father. [*Kneels*]

BECKET. Son, I absolve thee in the name of God.

LOUIS [*rising*]. Return to Sens, where we will care for you.
The wine and wealth of all our France are yours;
Rest in our realm, and be at peace with all. [*Exeunt*]

VOICES FROM THE CROWD. Long live the good King Louis! God bless the great Archbishop!

[*Re-enter* HENRY *and* JOHN OF OXFORD]

HENRY [*looking after* KING LOUIS *and* BECKET]. Ay, there they go — both backs are turn'd to me —
Why then I strike into my former path
For England, crown young Henry there, and make
Our waning Eleanor all but love me! John,
Thou hast served me heretofore with Rome — and well.
They call thee John the Swearer.

JOHN OF OXFORD. For this reason,
That, being ever duteous to the King,
I evermore have sworn upon his side,
And ever mean to do it.

HENRY [*claps him on the shoulder*]. Honest John!
To Rome again! the storm begins again.
Spare not thy tongue! be lavish with our coins,
Threaten our junction with the Emperor — flatter
And fright the Pope — bribe all the Cardinals — leave
Lateran and Vatican in one dust of gold —
Swear and unswear, state and misstate thy best!
I go to have young Henry crown'd by York.

ACT III

SCENE FIRST. — *The Bower.*

[HENRY *and* ROSAMUND]

HENRY. All that you say is just. I cannot answer it.
Till better times, when I shall put away —

ROSAMUND. What will you put away?

HENRY. That which you ask me
Till better times. Let it content you now
There is no woman that I love so well.

ROSAMUND. No woman but should be content with that —

HENRY. And one fair child to fondle!

ROSAMUND. O yes, the child
We waited for so long — heaven's gift at last —
And how you doted on him then! To-day
I almost fear'd your kiss was colder — yes —
But then the child *is* such a child. What chance
That he should ever spread into the man
Here in our silence? I have done my best.
I am not learn'd.

HENRY. I am the King, his father,
And I will look to it. Is our secret ours?
Have you had any alarm? no stranger?

ROSAMUND. No.
The warder of the bower hath given himself
Of late to wine. I sometimes think he sleeps
When he should watch; and yet what fear? the people
Believe the wood enchanted. No one comes,
Nor foe nor friend; his fond excess of wine
Springs from the loneliness of my poor bower,
Which weighs even on me.

HENRY. Yet these tree-towers,
Their long bird-echoing minster-aisles,— the voice
Of the perpetual brook, these golden slopes
Of Solomon-shaming flowers — that was your saying,
All pleased you so at first.

ROSAMUND. Not now so much.
My Anjou bower was scarce as beautiful.
But you were oftener there. I have none but you.
The brook's voice is not yours, and no flower, not
The sun himself, should he be changed to one,
Could shine away the darkness of that gap
Left by the lack of love.

HENRY. The lack of love!

ROSAMUND. Of one we love. Nay, I would not be bold,
Yet hoped ere this you might —
[*Looks earnestly at him*]

HENRY. Anything further?

ROSAMUND. Only my best bower-maiden died of late,
And that old priest whom John of Salisbury trusted
Hath sent another.

HENRY. Secret?

ROSAMUND. I but ask'd her
One question, and she primm'd her mouth and put
Her hands together — thus — and said, God help her,
That she was sworn to silence.

HENRY. What did you ask her?

ROSAMUND. Some daily something-nothing.

HENRY. Secret, then?

ROSAMUND. I do not love her. Must you go, my liege,
So suddenly?

HENRY. I came to England suddenly,
And on a great occasion sure to wake
As great a wrath in Becket —

ROSAMUND. Always Becket!
He always comes between us.

HENRY. — And to meet it
I needs must leave as suddenly. It is raining,
Put on your hood and see me to the bounds. [*Exeunt*]

MARGERY [*singing behind scene*].

Babble in bower
  Under the rose!
Bee mustn't buzz,
  Whoop — but he knows.

Kiss me, little one,
  Nobody near!
Grasshopper, grasshopper,
  Whoop — you can hear.

Kiss in the bower,
  Tit on the tree!
Bird mustn't tell,
  Whoop — he can see.

[*Enter* MARGERY]

I ha' been but a week here and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, for to be sure it's no more than a week since our old Father Philip that has confessed our mother for twenty years, and she was hard put to it, and to speak truth, nigh at the end of our last crust, and that mouldy, and she cried out on him to put me forth in the world and to make me a woman of the world, and to win my own bread, whereupon he asked our mother if I could keep a quiet tongue i' my head, and not speak till I was spoke to, and I answered for myself that I never spoke more than was needed, and he told me he would advance me to the service of a great lady, and took me ever so far away, and gave me a great pat o' the cheek for a pretty wench, and said it was a pity to blindfold such eyes as mine, and such to be sure they be, but he blinded 'em for all that, and so brought me no-hows as I may say, and the more shame to him after his promise, into a garden and not into the world, and bade me whatever I saw not to speak one word, an' it 'ud be well for me in the end, for there were great ones who would look after me, and to be sure I ha' seen great ones to-day — and then not to speak one word, for that's the rule o' the garden, tho' to be sure if I had been Eve i' the garden I shouldn't ha' minded the apple, for what's an apple, you know, save to a child, and I'm no child, but more a

woman o' the world than my lady here, and I ha' seen what I ha' seen — tho' to be sure if I hadn't minded it we should all on us ha' had to go, bless the Saints, wi' bare backs, but the backs 'ud ha' countenanced one another, and belike it 'ud ha' been always summer, and anyhow I am as well-shaped as my lady here, and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, and what's the good of my talking to myself, for here comes my lady [*enter* ROSAMUND], and, my lady, tho' I shouldn't speak one word, I wish you joy o' the King's brother.

ROSAMUND. What is it you mean?

MARGERY. I mean your goodman, your husband, my lady, for I saw your ladyship a-parting wi' him even now i' the coppice, when I was a-getting o' bluebells for your ladyship's nose to smell on — and I ha' seen the King once at Oxford, and he's as like the King as fingernail to fingernail, and I thought at first it was the King, only you know the King's married, for King Louis —

ROSAMUND. Married!

MARGERY. Years and years, my lady, for her husband, King Louis —

ROSAMUND. Hush!

MARGERY. — And I thought if it were the King's brother he had a better bride than the King, for the people do say that his is bad beyond all reckoning, and —

ROSAMUND. The people lie.

MARGERY. Very like, my lady, but most on 'em know an honest woman and a lady when they see her, and besides they say, she makes songs, and that's against her, for I never knew an honest woman that could make songs, tho' to be sure our mother 'ill sing me old songs by the hour, but then, God help her, she had 'em from her mother, and her mother from her mother back and back for ever so long, but none of 'em ever made songs, and they were all honest.

ROSAMUND. Go, you shall tell me of her some other time.

MARGERY. There's none so much to tell on her, my lady, only she kept the seventh commandment better than some I know on, or I couldn't look your ladyship i' the face, and she brew'd the best ale in all Glo'ster, that is to say in her time when she had the 'Crown.'

ROSAMUND. The crown! who?

MARGERY. Mother.

ROSAMUND. I mean her whom you call — fancy — my husband's brother's wife.

MARGERY. Oh, Queen Eleanor. Yes, my lady; and tho' I be sworn not to speak a word, I can tell you all about her, if —

ROSAMUND. No word now. I am faint and sleepy. Leave me. Nay — go. What! will you anger me?

[*Exit* MARGERY]

He charged me not to question any of those
About me. Have I? no! she question'd *me*.
Did she not slander *him?* Should she stay here?
May she not tempt me, being at my side,
To question *her?* Nay, can I send her hence
Without his kingly leave? I am in the dark.
I have lived, poor bird, from cage to cage, and known
Nothing but him — happy to know no more,
So that he loved me — and he loves me — yes,
And bound me by his love to secrecy
Till his own time.
Eleanor, Eleanor, have I
Not heard ill things of her in France? Oh, she's
The Queen of France. I see it — some confusion,
Some strange mistake. I did not hear aright,
Myself confused with parting from the King.

MARGERY [*behind scene*]. Bee mustn't buzz,
Whoop — but he knows.

ROSAMUND. Yet her — what her? he hinted of some her —
When he was here before —
Something that would displease me. Hath he stray'd
From love's clear path into the common bush,
And, being scratch'd, returns to his true rose,
Who hath not thorn enough to prick him for it,
Ev'n with a word?

MARGERY [*behind scene*]. Bird mustn't tell,
Whoop — he can see.

ROSAMUND. I would not hear him.
Nay — there's more — he frown'd
'No mate for her, if it should come to that' —
To that — to what?

MARGERY [*behind scene*]. Whoop — but he knows,

Whoop — but he knows.

ROSAMUND. O God! some dreadful truth is breaking on me —
Some dreadful thing is coming on me.

[*Enter* GEOFFREY]

Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY. What are you crying for, when the sun shines?

ROSAMUND. Hath not thy father left us to ourselves?

GEOFFREY. Ay, but he's taken the rain with him. I hear Margery: I'll go play with her. [*Exit* GEOFFREY]

ROSAMUND.

Rainbow, stay,
Gleam upon gloom,
Bright as my dream,
Rainbow, stay!
But it passes away,
Gloom upon gleam,
Dark as my doom —
O rainbow, stay.

SCENE SECOND. — *Outside the Woods near* ROSAMUND'S *Bower.*

[ELEANOR. FITZURSE]

ELEANOR. Up from the salt lips of the land we two
Have track'd the King to this dark inland wood;
And somewhere hereabouts he vanish'd. Here
His turtle builds; his exit is our adit:
Watch! he will out again, and presently,
Seeing he must to Westminster and crown
Young Henry there to-morrow.

FITZURSE. We have watch'd
So long in vain, he hath pass'd out again,
And on the other side.

[*A great horn winded*]

Hark! Madam!

ELEANOR. Ay,
How ghostly sounds that horn in the black wood!

[*A countryman flying*]

Whither away, man? what are you flying from?

COUNTRYMAN. The witch! the witch! she sits naked by a great heap of gold in the middle of the wood, and when the horn sounds she comes out as a wolf. Get you hence! a man passed in there to-day: I holla'd to him, but he didn't hear me: he'll never out again, the witch has got him. I daren't stay — I daren't stay!

ELEANOR. Kind of the witch to give thee warning tho'. [*Man flies*]
Is not this wood-witch of the rustic's fear
Our woodland Circe that hath witch'd the King?

[*Horn sounded. Another flying*]

FITZURSE. Again! stay, fool, and tell me why thou fliest.

COUNTRYMAN. Fly thou too. The King keeps his forest head of game here, and when that horn sounds, a score of wolf-dogs are let loose that will tear thee piecemeal. Linger not till the third horn. Fly! [*Exit*]

ELEANOR. This is the likelier tale. We have hit the place.
Now let the King's fine game look to itself. [*Horn*]

FITZURSE. Again! —
And far on in the dark heart of the wood
I hear the yelping of the hounds of hell.

ELEANOR. I have my dagger here to still their throats.

FITZURSE. Nay, Madam, not to-night — the night is falling.
What can be done to-night?

ELEANOR. Well — well — away.

SCENE THIRD. — *Traitor's Meadow at Frêteval. Pavilions and tents of the English and French Baronage.*

[BECKET *and* HERBERT OF BOSHAM]

BECKET. See here!

HERBERT. What's here?

BECKET. A notice from the priest,
To whom our John of Salisbury committed
The secret of the bower, that our wolf-Queen
Is prowling round the fold. I should be back
In England ev'n for this.

HERBERT. These are by-things
In the great cause.

BECKET. The by-things of the Lord
Are the wrong'd innocences that will cry
From all the hidden by-ways of the world
In the great day against the wronger. I know
Thy meaning. Perish she, I, all, before
The Church should suffer wrong!

HERBERT. Do you see, my lord,
There is the King talking with Walter Map?

BECKET. He hath the Pope's last letters, and they threaten

The immediate thunder-blast of interdict:
Yet he can scarce be touching upon those,
Or scarce would smile that fashion.

HERBERT. Winter sunshine!
Beware of opening out thy bosom to it,
Lest thou, myself, and all thy flock should catch
An after ague-fit of trembling. Look!
He bows, he bares his head, he is coming hither.
Still with a smile.

[*Enter* KING HENRY *and* WALTER MAP]

HENRY. We have had so many hours together, Thomas,
So many happy hours alone together,
That I would speak with you once more alone.

BECKET. My liege, your will and happiness are mine.

[*Exeunt* KING *and* BECKET]

HERBERT. The same smile still.

WALTER MAP. Do you see that great black cloud that hath come over the sun and cast us all into shadow?

HERBERT. And feel it too.

WALTER MAP. And see you yon side-beam that is forced from under it, and sets the church-tower over there all a-hell-fire as it were?

HERBERT. Ay.

WALTER MAP. It is this black, bell-silencing, anti-marrying, burial-hindering interdict that hath squeezed out this side-smile upon Canterbury, whereof may come conflagration. Were I Thomas, I wouldn't trust it. Sudden change is a house on sand; and tho' I count Henry honest enough, yet when fear creeps in at the front, honesty steals out at the back, and the King at last is fairly scared by this cloud — this interdict. I have been more for the King than the Church in this matter — yea, even for the sake of the Church: for, truly, as the case stood, you had safelier have slain an archbishop than a she-goat: but our recoverer and upholder of customs hath in this crowning of young Henry by York and London so violated the immemorial usage of the Church, that, like the gravedigger's child I have heard of, trying to ring the bell, he hath half-hanged himself in the rope of the Church, or rather pulled all the Church with the Holy Father astride of it down upon his own head.

HERBERT. Were you there?

WALTER MAP. In the church rope? — no. I was at the crowning, for I have pleasure in the pleasure of crowds, and to read the faces of men at a great show.

HERBERT. And how did Roger of York comport himself?

WALTER MAP. As magnificently and archiepiscopally as our Thomas would have done: only there was a dare-devil in his eye — I should say a dare-Becket. He thought less of two kings than of one Roger the king of the occasion. Foliot is the holier man, perhaps the better. Once or twice there ran a twitch across his face as who should say what's to follow? but Salisbury was a calf cowed by Mother Church, and every now and then glancing about him like a thief at night when he hears a door open in the house and thinks 'the master.'

HERBERT. And the father-king?

WALTER MAP. The father's eye was so tender it would have called a goose off the green, and once he strove to hide his face, like the Greek king when his daughter was sacrificed, but he thought better of it: it was but the sacrifice of a kingdom to his son, a smaller matter; but as to the young crownling himself, he looked so malapert in the eyes, that had I fathered him I had given him more of the rod than the sceptre. Then followed the thunder of the captains and the shouting, and so we came on to the banquet, from whence there puffed out such an incense of unctuosity into the nostrils of our Gods of Church and State, that Lucullus or Apicius might have sniffed it in their Hades of heathenism, so that the smell of their own roast had not come across it —

HERBERT. Map, tho' you make your butt too big, you overshoot it.

WALTER MAP. — For as to the fish, they de-miracled the miraculous draught, and might have sunk a navy —

HERBERT. There again, Goliasing and Goliathising!

WALTER MAP. — And as for the flesh at table, a whole Peter's sheet, with all manner of game, and four-footed things, and fowls —

HERBERT. And all manner of creeping things too?

WALTER MAP. — Well, there were Abbots — but they did not bring their women; and so we were dull enough at first, but in the end we flourished out into a merriment; for the old King would act servitor and hand a dish to

his son; whereupon my Lord of York — his fine-cut face bowing and beaming with all that courtesy which hath less loyalty in it than the backward scrape of the clown's heel — 'great honour,' says he, 'from the King's self to the King's son.' Did you hear the young King's quip?

HERBERT. No, what was it?

WALTER MAP. Glancing at the days when his father was only Earl of Anjou, he answered: — 'Should not an earl's son wait on a king's son?' And when the cold corners of the King's mouth began to thaw, there was a great motion of laughter among us, part real, part childlike, to be freed from the dulness — part royal, for King and kingling both laughed, and so we could not but laugh, as by a royal necessity — part childlike again — when we felt we had laughed too long and could not stay ourselves — many midriff-shaken even to tears, as springs gush out after earthquakes — but from those, as I said before, there may come a conflagration — tho', to keep the figure moist and make it hold water, I should say rather, the lacrymation of a lamentation; but look if Thomas have not flung himself at the King's feet. They have made it up again — for the moment.

HERBERT. Thanks to the blessed Magdalen, whose day it is.

[*Re-enter* HENRY *and* BECKET. (*During their conference the* BARONS *and* BISHOPS *of France and England come in at back of stage.*]

BECKET. Ay, King! for in thy kingdom, as thou knowest,
The spouse of the Great King, thy King, hath fallen —
The daughter of Zion lies beside the way —
The priests of Baal tread her underfoot —
The golden ornaments are stolen from her —

HENRY. Have I not promised to restore her, Thomas,
And send thee back again to Canterbury?

BECKET. Send back again those exiles of my kin
Who wander famine-wasted thro' the world.

HENRY. Have I not promised, man, to send them back?

BECKET. Yet one thing more. Thou hast broken thro' the pales
Of privilege, crowning thy young son by York,
London and Salisbury — not Canterbury.

HENRY. York crown'd the Conqueror — not Canterbury.

BECKET. There was no Canterbury in William's time.

HENRY. But Hereford, you know, crown'd the first Henry.

BECKET. But Anselm crown'd this Henry o'er again.

HENRY. And thou shalt crown my Henry o'er again.

BECKET. And is it then with thy goodwill that I
Proceed against thine evil councillors,
And hurl the dread ban of the Church on those
Who made the second mitre play the first,
And acted me?

HENRY. Well, well, then — have thy way!
It may be they were evil councillors.
What more, my lord Archbishop? What more, Thomas?
I make thee full amends. Say all thy say,
But blaze not out before the Frenchmen here.

BECKET. More? Nothing, so thy promise be thy deed.

HENRY [*holding out his hand*]. Give me thy hand. My Lords of France and England,
My friend of Canterbury and myself
Are now once more at perfect amity.
Unkingly should I be, and most unknightly,
Not striving still, however much in vain,
To rival him in Christian charity.

HERBERT. All praise to Heaven, and sweet St. Magdalen!

HENRY. And so farewell until we meet in England.

BECKET. I fear, my liege, we may not meet in England.

HENRY. How, do you make me a traitor?

BECKET. No, indeed!
That be far from thee.

HENRY. Come, stay with us, then,
Before you part for England.

BECKET. I am bound
For that one hour to stay with good King Louis,
Who helpt me when none else.

HERBERT. He said thy life
Was not one hour's worth in England save

King Henry gave thee first the kiss of peace.

HENRY. He said so? Louis, did he? look you, Herbert,
When I was in mine anger with King Louis,
I sware I would not give the kiss of peace,
Not on French ground, nor any ground but English,
Where his cathedral stands. Mine old friend, Thomas,
I would there were that perfect trust between us,
That health of heart, once ours, ere Pope or King
Had come between us! Even now — who knows? —
I might deliver all things to thy hand —
If . . . but I say no more . . . farewell, my lord.

BECKET. Farewell, my liege!

[*Exit* HENRY, *then the* BARONS *and* BISHOPS]

WALTER MAP. There again! when the full fruit of the royal promise might have dropt into thy mouth hadst thou but opened it to thank him.

BECKET. He fenced his royal promise with an *if*.

WALTER MAP. And is the King's *if* too high a stile for your lordship to overstep and come at all things in the next field?

BECKET. Ay, if this *if* be like the Devil's '*if*
Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'

HERBERT. Oh, Thomas,
I could fall down and worship thee, my Thomas,
For thou hast trodden this wine-press alone.

BECKET. Nay, of the people there are many with me.

WALTER MAP. I am not altogether with you, my lord, tho' I am none of those that would raise a storm between you, lest ye should draw together like two ships in a calm. You wrong the King: he meant what he said to-day. Who shall vouch for his to-morrows? One word further. Doth not the *fewness* of anything make the fulness of it in estimation? Is not virtue prized mainly for its rarity, and great baseness loathed as an exception? for were all, my lord, as noble as yourself, who would look up to you? and were all as base as — who shall I say — Fitzurse and his following — who would look down upon them? My lord, you have put so many of the King's household out of communion, that they begin to smile at it.

BECKET. At their peril, at their peril —

WALTER MAP. — For tho' the drop may hollow out the dead stone, doth not the living skin thicken against perpetual whippings? This is the second grain of good counsel I ever proffered thee, and so cannot suffer by the rule of frequency. Have I sown it in salt? I trust not, for before God I promise you the King hath many more wolves than he can tame in his woods of England, and if it suit their purpose to howl for the King, and you still move against him, you may have no less than to die for it; but God and his free wind grant your lordship a happy home-return and the King's kiss of peace in Kent. Farewell! I must follow the King. [*Exit*]

HERBERT. Ay, and I warrant the customs. Did the King
Speak of the customs?

BECKET. No! — To die for it —
I live to die for it, I die to live for it.
The State will die, the Church can never die.
The King's not like to die for that which dies;
But I must die for that which never dies.
It will be so — my visions in the Lord:
It must be so, my friend! the wolves of England
Must murder her one shepherd, that the sheep
May feed in peace. False figure, Map would say.
Earth's falses are heaven's truths. And when my voice
Is martyr'd mute, and this man disappears,
That perfect trust may come again between us,
And there, there, there, not here I shall rejoice
To find my stray sheep back within the fold.
The crowd are scattering, let us move away!
And thence to England. [*Exeunt*]

ACT IV

SCENE FIRST. — *The outskirts of the Bower.*

GEOFFREY [*coming out of the wood*]. Light again! light again! Margery?

no, that's a finer thing there. How it glitters!

ELEANOR [*entering*]. Come to me, little one. How camest thou hither?

GEOFFREY. On my legs.

ELEANOR. And mighty pretty legs too. Thou art the prettiest child I ever saw. Wilt thou love me?

GEOFFREY. No; I only love mother.

ELEANOR. Ay; and who is thy mother?

GEOFFREY. They call her — But she lives secret, you see.

ELEANOR. Why?

GEOFFREY. Don't know why.

ELEANOR. Ay, but some one comes to see her now and then. Who is he?

GEOFFREY. Can't tell.

ELEANOR. What does she call him?

GEOFFREY. My liege.

ELEANOR. Pretty one, how camest thou?

GEOFFREY. There was a bit of yellow silk here and there, and it looked pretty like a glowworm, and I thought if I followed it I should find the fairies.

ELEANOR. I am the fairy, pretty one, a good fairy to thy mother. Take me to her.

GEOFFREY. There are good fairies and bad fairies, and sometimes she cries, and can't sleep sound o' nights because of the bad fairies.

ELEANOR. She shall cry no more; she shall sleep sound enough if thou wilt take me to her. I am her good fairy.

GEOFFREY. But you don't look like a good fairy. Mother does. You are not pretty, like mother.

ELEANOR. We can't all of us be as pretty as thou art — [*aside*] little bastard. Come, here is a golden chain I will give thee if thou wilt lead me to thy mother.

GEOFFREY. No — no gold. Mother says gold spoils all. Love is the only gold.

ELEANOR. I love thy mother, my pretty boy. Show me where thou camest out of the wood.

GEOFFREY. By this tree; but I don't know if I can find the way back again.

ELEANOR. Where's the warder?

GEOFFREY. Very bad. Somebody struck him.

ELEANOR. Ay? who was that?

GEOFFREY. Can't tell. But I heard say he had had a stroke, or you'd have heard his horn before now. Come along, then; we shall see the silk here and there, and I want my supper.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE SECOND. — ROSAMUND'S *Bower.*

ROSAMUND. The boy so late; pray God, he be not lost.
I sent this Margery, and she comes not back;
I sent another, and she comes not back.
I go myself — so many alleys, crossings,
Paths, avenues — nay, if I lost him, now
The folds have fallen from the mystery,
And left all naked, I were lost indeed.

[*Enter* GEOFFREY *and* ELEANOR]

Geoffrey, the pain thou hast put me to!
[*Seeing* ELEANOR]
Ha, you!
How came you hither?

ELEANOR. Your own child brought me hither!

GEOFFREY. You said you couldn't trust Margery, and I watched her and followed her into the woods, and I lost her and went on and on till I found the light and the lady, and she says she can make you sleep o' nights.

ROSAMUND. How dared you? Know you not this bower is secret,
Of and belonging to the King of England,
More sacred than his forests for the chase?
Nay, nay, Heaven help you; get you hence in haste
Lest worse befall you.

ELEANOR. Child, I am mine own self
Of and belonging to the King. The King
Hath divers ofs and ons, ofs and belongings,
Almost as many as your true Mussulman —
Belongings, paramours, whom it pleases him
To call his wives; but so it chances, child,
That I am his main paramour, his sultana.
But since the fondest pair of doves will jar,
Ev'n in a cage of gold, we had words of late,
And thereupon he call'd my children bastards.

Do you believe that you are married to him?

ROSAMUND. I *should* believe it.

ELEANOR. You must not believe it,
Because I have a wholesome medicine here
Puts that belief asleep. Your answer, beauty!
Do you believe that you are married to him?

ROSAMUND. Geoffrey, my boy, I saw the ball you lost in the fork of the great willow over the brook. Go. See that you do not fall in. Go.

GEOFFREY. And leave you alone with the good fairy. She calls you beauty, but I don't like her looks. Well, you bid me go, and I'll have my ball anyhow. Shall I find you asleep when I come back?

ROSAMUND. Go. [*Exit* GEOFFREY]

ELEANOR. He is easily found again. *Do* you believe it?
I pray you then to take my sleeping-draught;
But if you should not care to take it —
See! [*Draws a dagger*]
What! have I scared the red rose from your face
Into your heart? But this will find it there,
And dig it from the root for ever.

ROSAMUND. Help! help!

ELEANOR. They say that walls have ears; but these, it seems,
Have none! and I have none — to pity thee.

ROSAMUND. I do beseech you — my child is so young,
So backward too; I cannot leave him yet.
I am not so happy I could not die myself,
But the child is so young. You have children — his;
And mine is the King's child; so, if you love him —
Nay, if you love him, there is great wrong done
Somehow; but if you do not — there are those
Who say you do not love him — let me go
With my young boy, and I will hide my face,
Blacken and gipsyfy it; none shall know me;
The King shall never hear of me again,
But I will beg my bread along the world
With my young boy, and God will be our guide.
I never meant you harm in any way.
See, I can say no more.

ELEANOR. Will you not say you are not married to him?

ROSAMUND. Ay, Madam, I can *say* it, if you will.

ELEANOR. Then is thy pretty boy a bastard?

ROSAMUND. No.

ELEANOR. And thou thyself a proven wanton?

ROSAMUND. No.
I am none such. I never loved but one.
I have heard of such that range from love to love,
Like the wild beast — if you can call it love.
I have heard of such — yea, even among those
Who sit on thrones — I never saw any such,
Never knew any such, and howsoever
You do misname me, match'd with any such,
I am snow to mud.

ELEANOR. The more the pity then
That thy true home — the heavens — cry out for thee
Who art too pure for earth.

[*Enter* FITZURSE]

FITZURSE. Give her to me.

ELEANOR. The Judas-lover of our passion-play
Hath track'd us hither.

FITZURSE. Well, why not? I follow'd
You and the child: he babbled all the way.
Give her to me to make my honeymoon.

ELEANOR. Ay, as the bears love honey. Could you keep her
Indungeon'd from one whisper of the wind,
Dark even from a side glance of the moon,
And oubliette in the centre — No!
I follow out my hate and thy revenge.

FITZURSE. You bade me take revenge another way —
To bring her to the dust. . . . Come with me, love,
And I will love thee. . . . Madam, let her live.
I have a far-off burrow where the King
Would miss her and for ever.

ELEANOR. How sayest thou, sweetheart?
Wilt thou go with him? he will marry thee.

ROSAMUND. Give me the poison; set me free of him!
[ELEANOR *offers the vial*]
No, no! I will not have it.
ELEANOR. Then this other,
The wiser choice, because my sleeping-draught
May bloat thy beauty out of shape, and make
Thy body loathsome even to thy child;
While this but leaves thee with a broken heart;
A doll-face blanch'd and bloodless, over which
If pretty Geoffrey do not break his own,
It must be broken for him.
ROSAMUND. O I see now
Your purpose is to fright me — a troubadour
You play with words. You had never used so many,
Not if you meant it, I am sure. The child . . .
No . . . mercy! No! [*Kneels*]
ELEANOR. Play! . . . that bosom never
Heaved under the King's hand with such true passion
As at this loveless knife that stirs the riot
Which it will quench in blood! Slave, if he love thee,
Thy life is worth the wrestle for it: arise,
And dash thyself against me that I may slay thee!
The worm! shall I let her go? But ha! what's here?
By very God, the cross I gave the King!
His village darling in some lewd caress
Has wheedled it off the King's neck to her own.
By thy leave, beauty. Ay, the same! I warrant
Thou hast sworn on this my cross a hundred times
Never to leave him — and that merits death,
False oath on holy cross — for thou must leave him
To-day, but not quite yet. My good Fitzurse,
The running down the chase is kindlier sport
Ev'n than the death. Who knows but that thy lover
May plead so pitifully, that I may spare thee?
Come hither, man; stand there. [*To* ROSAMUND] Take thy one chance;
Catch at the last straw. Kneel to thy lord Fitzurse;
Crouch even because thou hatest him; fawn upon him
For thy life and thy son's.
ROSAMUND [*rising*]. I am a Clifford,
My son a Clifford and Plantagenet.
I am to die then, tho' there stand beside thee
One who might grapple with thy dagger, if he
Had aught of man, or thou of woman; or I
Would bow to such a baseness as would make me
Most worthy of it; both of us will die,
And I will fly with my sweet boy to heaven,
And shriek to all the saints among the stars:
'Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of England!
Murder'd by that adulteress Eleanor,
Whose doings are a horror to the east,
A hissing in the west!' Have we not heard
Raymond of Poitou, thine own uncle — nay,
Geoffrey Plantagenet, thine own husband's father —
Nay, ev'n the accursed heathen Saladdeen —
Strike!
I challenge thee to meet me before God.
Answer me there.
ELEANOR [*raising the dagger*]. This in thy bosom, fool,
And after in thy bastard's!

[*Enter* BECKET *from behind. Catches hold of her arm*]

BECKET. Murderess!
[*The dagger falls; they stare at one another. After a pause*]
ELEANOR. My lord, we know you proud of your fine hand,
But having now admired it long enough,
We find that it is mightier than it seems —
At least mine own is frailer: you are laming it.
BECKET. And lamed and maim'd to dislocation, better
Than raised to take a life which Henry bade me
Guard from the stroke that dooms thee after death
To wail in deathless flame.
ELEANOR. Nor you, nor I
Have now to learn, my lord, that our good Henry

Says many a thing in sudden heats, which he
Gainsays by next sunrising — often ready
To tear himself for having said as much.
My lord, Fitzurse —

BECKET. He too! what dost thou here?
Dares the bear slouch into the lion's den?
One downward plunge of his paw would rend away
Eyesight and manhood, life itself, from thee.
Go, lest I blast thee with anathema,
And make thee a world's horror.

FITZURSE. My lord, I shall
Remember this.

BECKET. I *do* remember thee;
Lest I remember thee to the lion, go.

[*Exit* FITZURSE]

Take up your dagger; put it in the sheath.

ELEANOR. Might not your courtesy stoop to hand it me?
But crowns must bow when mitres sit so high.
Well — well — too costly to be left or lost. [*Picks up the dagger*]
I had it from an Arab soldan, who,
When I was there in Antioch, marvell'd at
Our unfamiliar beauties of the west;
But wonder'd more at my much constancy
To the monk-king, Louis, our former burthen,
From whom, as being too kin, you know, my lord,
God's grace and Holy Church deliver'd us.
I think, time given, I could have talk'd him out of
His ten wives into one. Look at the hilt.
What excellent workmanship. In our poor west
We cannot do it so well.

BECKET. We can do worse.
Madam, I saw your dagger at her throat;
I heard your savage cry.

ELEANOR. Well acted, was it?
A comedy meant to seem a tragedy —
A feint, a farce. My honest lord, you are known
Thro' all the courts of Christendom as one
That mars a cause with over-violence.
You have wrong'd Fitzurse. I speak not of myself.
We thought to scare this minion of the King
Back from her churchless commerce with the King
To the fond arms of her first love, Fitzurse,
Who swore to marry her. You have spoilt the farce.
My savage cry? Why, she — she — when I strove
To work against her license for her good,
Bark'd out at me such monstrous charges, that
The King himself, for love of his own sons,
If hearing, would have spurn'd her; whereupon
I menaced her with this, as when we threaten
A yelper with a stick. Nay, I deny not,
That I was somewhat anger'd. Do you hear me?
Believe or no, I care not. You have lost
The ear of the King. I have it. . . , My lord Paramount,
Our great High-priest, will not your Holiness
Vouchsafe a gracious answer to your Queen?

BECKET. Rosamund hath not answer'd you one word;
Madam, I will not answer you one word.
Daughter, the world hath trick'd thee. Leave it, daughter;
Come thou with me to Godstow nunnery,
And live what may be left thee of a life
Saved as by miracle alone with Him
Who gave it.

[*Re-enter* GEOFFREY]

GEOFFREY. Mother, you told me a great fib: it wasn't in the willow.

BECKET. Follow us, my son, and we will find it for thee —
Or something manlier.

[*Exeunt* BECKET, ROSAMUND, *and* GEOFFREY]

ELEANOR. The world hath trick'd her — that's the King; if so,
There was the farce, the feint — not mine. And yet
I am all but sure my dagger was a feint
Till the worm turn'd — not life shot up in blood,
But death drawn in; — [*looking at the vial*] *this* was no feint then? no.
But can I swear to that, had she but given

Plain answer to plain query? nay, methinks
Had she but bow'd herself to meet the wave
Of humiliation, worshipt whom she loathed,
I should have let her be, scorn'd her too much
To harm her. Henry — Becket tells him this —
To take my life might lose him Aquitaine.
Too politic for that. Imprison me?
No, for it came to nothing — only a feint.
Did she not tell me I was playing on her?
I'll swear to mine own self it was a feint.
Why should I swear, Eleanor, who am, or was,
A sovereign power? The King plucks out their eyes
Who anger him, and shall not I, the Queen,
Tear out her heart — kill, kill with knife or venom
One of his slanderous harlots? 'None of such?'
I love her none the more. Tut, the chance gone,
She lives — but not for him; one point is gain'd.
O I, that thro' the Pope divorced King Louis,
Scorning his monkery, — I that wedded Henry,
Honouring his manhood, — will he not mock at me
The jealous fool balk'd of her will — with *him?*
But he and he must never meet again.
Reginald Fitzurse!

[*Re-enter* FITZURSE]

FITZURSE. Here, Madam, at your pleasure.

ELEANOR. My pleasure is to have a man about me.
Why did you slink away so like a cur?

FITZURSE. Madam, I am as much man as the King.
Madam, I fear Church-censures like your King.

ELEANOR. He grovels to the Church when he's black-blooded,
But kinglike fought the proud archbishop, — kinglike
Defied the Pope, and, like his kingly sires,
The Normans, striving still to break or bind
The spiritual giant with our island laws
And customs, made me for the moment proud
Ev'n of that stale Church-bond which link'd me with him
To bear him kingly sons. I am not so sure
But that I love him still. Thou as much man!
No more of that; we will to France and be
Beforehand with the King, and brew from out
This Godstow-Becket intermeddling such
A strong hate-philtre as may madden him — madden
Against his priest beyond all hellebore.

ACT V

SCENE FIRST. — *Castle in Normandy.* KING'S *chamber.*

[HENRY, ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT, JOCELYN OF SALISBURY]

ROGER OF YORK. Nay, nay, my liege,
He rides abroad with armed followers,
Hath broken all his promises to thyself,
Cursed and anathematised us right and left,
Stirr'd up a party there against your son —

HENRY. Roger of York, you always hated him,
Even when you both were boys at Theobald's.

ROGER OF YORK. I always hated boundless arrogance.
In mine own cause I strove against him there,
And in thy cause I strive against him now.

HENRY. I cannot think he moves against my son,
Knowing right well with what a tenderness
He loved my son.

ROGER OF YORK. Before you made him king.
But Becket ever moves against a king.
The Church is all — the crime to be a king.
We trust your Royal Grace, lord of more land

Than any crown in Europe, will not yield
To lay your neck beneath your citizen's heel.

HENRY. Not to a Gregory of my throning! No.

FOLIOT. My royal liege, in aiming at your love,
It may be sometimes I have overshot
My duties to our Holy Mother Church,
Tho' all the world allows I fall no inch
Behind this Becket, rather go beyond
In scourgings, macerations, mortifyings,
Fasts, disciplines that clear the spiritual eye,
And break the soul from earth. Let all that be.
I boast not: but you know thro' all this quarrel
I still have cleaved to the crown, in hope the crown
Would cleave to me that but obey'd the crown,
Crowning your son; for which our loyal service,
And since we likewise swore to obey the customs,
York and myself, and our good Salisbury here,
Are push'd from out communion of the Church.

JOCELYN OF SALISBURY. Becket hath trodden on us like worms, my liege;
Trodden one half dead; one half, but half-alive,
Cries to the King.

HENRY. [*Aside*] Take care o' thyself, O King.

JOCELYN OF SALISBURY. Being so crush'd and so humiliated
We scarcely dare to bless the food we eat
Because of Becket.

HENRY. What would ye have me do?

ROGER OF YORK. Summon your barons; take their counsel: yet
I know — could swear — as long as Becket breathes,
Your Grace will never have one quiet hour.

HENRY. What? . . . Ay . . . but pray you do not work upon me.
I see your drift . . . it may be so . . . and yet
You know me easily anger'd. Will you hence?
He shall absolve you . . . you shall have redress.
I have a dizzying headache. Let me rest.
I'll call you by and by.

[*Exeunt* ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT, *and* JOCELYN OF SALISBURY]

Would he were dead! I have lost all love for him.
If God would take him in some sudden way —
Would he were dead. [*Lies down*]

PAGE [*entering*]. My liege, the Queen of England.

HENRY. God's eyes! [*Starting up*]

[*Enter* ELEANOR]

ELEANOR. Of England? Say of Aquitaine.
I am no Queen of England. I had dream'd
I was the bride of England, and a queen.

HENRY. And, — while you dream'd you were the bride of England, —
Stirring her baby-king against me? ha!

ELEANOR. The brideless Becket is thy king and mine:
I will go live and die in Aquitaine.

HENRY. Except I clap thee into prison here,
Lest thou shouldst play the wanton there again.
Ha, you of Aquitaine! O you of Aquitaine!
You were but Aquitaine to Louis — no wife;
You are only Aquitaine to me — no wife.

ELEANOR. And why, my lord, should I be wife to one
That only wedded me for Aquitaine?
Yet this no wife — her six and thirty sail
Of Provence blew you to your English throne;
And this no wife has borne you four brave sons,
And one of them at least is like to prove
Bigger in our small world than thou art.

HENRY. Ay —
Richard, if he *be* mine — I hope him mine.
But thou art like enough to make him thine.

ELEANOR. Becket is like enough to make all his.

HENRY. Methought I had recover'd of the Becket,
That all was planed and bevell'd smooth again,
Save from some hateful cantrip of thine own.

ELEANOR. I will go live and die in Aquitaine.
I dream'd I was the consort of a king,
Not one whose back his priest has broken.

HENRY. What!
Is the end come? You, will you crown my foe
My victor in mid-battle? I will be
Sole master of my house. The end is mine.
What game, what juggle, what devilry are you playing?
Why do you thrust this Becket on me again?

ELEANOR. Why? for I *am* true wife, and have my fears
Lest Becket thrust you even from your throne.
Do you know this cross, my liege?

HENRY [*turning his head*]. Away! Not I.

ELEANOR. Not ev'n the central diamond, worth, I think,
Half of the Antioch whence I had it?

HENRY. That?

ELEANOR. I gave it you, and you your paramour;
She sends it back, as being dead to earth,
So dead henceforth to you.

HENRY. Dead! you have murder'd her,
Found out her secret bower and murder'd her!

ELEANOR. Your Becket knew the secret of your bower.

HENRY [*calling out*]. Ho there! thy rest of life is hopeless prison.

ELEANOR. And what would my own Aquitaine say to that?
First, free thy captive from *her* hopeless prison.

HENRY. O devil, can I free her from the grave?

ELEANOR. You are too tragic: both of us are players
In such a comedy as our court of Provence
Had laugh'd at. That's a delicate Latin lay
Of Walter Map: the lady holds the cleric
Lovelier than any soldier, his poor tonsure
A crown of Empire. Will you have it again?

[*Offering the cross. He dashes it down*]

St. Cupid, that is too irreverent.
Then mine once more. [*Puts it on*]
Your cleric hath your lady.
Nay, what uncomely faces, could he see you!
Foam at the mouth because King Thomas, lord
Not only of your vassals but amours,
Thro' chastest honour of the Decalogue
Hath used the full authority of his Church
To put her into Godstow nunnery.

HENRY. To put her into Godstow nunnery!
He dared not — liar! yet, yet I remember —
I do remember.
He bade me put her into a nunnery —
Into Godstow, into Hellstow, Devilstow!
The Church! the Church!
God's eyes! I would the Church were down in hell! [*Exit*]

ELEANOR. Aha!

[*Enter the four* KNIGHTS]

FITZURSE. What made the King cry out so furiously?

ELEANOR. Our Becket, who will not absolve the Bishops.
I think ye four have cause to love this Becket.

FITZURSE. I hate him for his insolence to all.

DE TRACY. And I for all his insolence to thee.

DE BRITO. I hate him for I hate him is my reason,
And yet I hate him for a hypocrite.

DE MORVILLE. I do not love him, for he did his best
To break the barons, and now braves the King.

ELEANOR. Strike, then, at once, the King would have him — See!

[*Re-enter* HENRY]

HENRY. No man to love me, honour me, obey me!
Sluggards and fools!
The slave that eat my bread has kick'd his King!
The dog I cramm'd with dainties worried me!
The fellow that on a lame jade came to court,
A ragged cloak for saddle — he, he, he,
To shake my throne, to push into my chamber —
My bed, where ev'n the slave is private — he —
I'll have her out again, he shall absolve
The bishops — they but did my will — not you —
Sluggards and fools, why do you stand and stare?
You are no King's men — you — you — you are Becket's men.

Down with King Henry! up with the Archbishop!
Will no man free me from this pestilent priest? [*Exit*]

[*The* KNIGHTS *draw their swords*]

ELEANOR. *Are* ye king's men? I am king's woman, I.

THE KNIGHTS. King's men! King's men!

SCENE SECOND. — *A Room in Canterbury Monastery*

[BECKET *and* JOHN OF SALISBURY]

BECKET. York said so?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Yes: a man may take good counsel
Ev'n from his foe.

BECKET. York will say anything.
What is he saying now? gone to the King
And taken our anathema with him. York!
Can the King de-anathematise this York?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Thomas, I would thou hadst return'd to England,
Like some wise prince of this world from his wars,
With more of olive-branch and amnesty
For foes at home — thou hast raised the world against thee.

BECKET. Why, John, my kingdom is not of this world.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. If it were more of this world it might be
More of the next. A policy of wise pardon
Wins here as well as there. To bless thine enemies —

BECKET. Ay, mine, not Heaven's.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. And may there not be something
Of this world's leaven in thee too, when crying
On Holy Church to thunder out her rights
And thine own wrong so pitilessly? Ah, Thomas,
The lightnings that we think are only Heaven's
Flash sometimes out of earth against the heavens.
The soldier, when he lets his whole self go
Lost in the common good, the common wrong,
Strikes truest ev'n for his own self. I crave
Thy pardon — I have still thy leave to speak.
Thou hast waged God's war against the King; and yet
We are self-uncertain creatures, and we may,
Yea, even when we know not, mix our spites
And private hates with our defence of Heaven.

[*Enter* EDWARD GRIM]

BECKET. Thou art but yesterday from Cambridge, Grim;
What say ye there of Becket?

GRIM. *I* believe him
The bravest in our roll of Primates down
From Austin — there are some — for there are men
Of canker'd judgment everywhere —

BECKET. Who hold
With York, with York against me.

GRIM. Well, my lord,
A stranger monk desires access to you.

BECKET. York against Canterbury, York against God!
I am open to him. [*Exit* GRIM]

[*Enter* ROSAMUND *as a Monk*]

ROSAMUND. Can I speak with you
Alone, my father?

BECKET. Come you to confess?

ROSAMUND. Not now.

BECKET. Then speak; this is my other self,
Who like my conscience never lets me be.

ROSAMUND [*throwing back the cowl*]. I know him; our good John of Salisbury.

BECKET. Breaking already from thy noviciate
To plunge into this bitter world again —
These wells of Marah. I am grieved, my daughter.
I thought that I had made a peace for thee.

ROSAMUND. Small peace was mine in my noviciate, father.
Thro' all closed doors a dreadful whisper crept
That thou wouldst excommunicate the King.
I could not eat, sleep, pray: I had with me
The monk's disguise thou gavest me for my bower:

I think our Abbess knew it and allow'd it.
I fled, and found thy name a charm to get me
Food, roof, and rest. I met a robber once,
I told him I was bound to see the Archbishop;
'Pass on,' he said, and in thy name I pass'd
From house to house. In one a son stone-blind
Sat by his mother's hearth: he had gone too far
Into the King's own woods; and the poor mother,
Soon as she learnt I was a friend of thine,
Cried out against the cruelty of the King.
I said it was the King's courts, not the King;
But she would not believe me, and she wish'd
The Church were king: she had seen the Archbishop once,
So mild, so kind. The people love thee, father.

BECKET. Alas! when I was Chancellor to the King,
I fear I was as cruel as the King.

ROSAMUND. Cruel? Oh, no — it is the law, not he;
The customs of the realm.

BECKET. The customs! customs!

ROSAMUND. My lord, you have not excommunicated him?
Oh, if you have, absolve him!

BECKET. Daughter, daughter,
Deal not with things you know not.

ROSAMUND. I know *him*.
Then you have done it, and I call *you* cruel.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. No, daughter, you mistake our good Archbishop;
For once in France the King had been so harsh,
He thought to excommunicate him — Thomas,
You could not — old affection master'd you,
You falter'd into tears.

ROSAMUND. God bless him for it.

BECKET. Nay, make me not a woman, John of Salisbury,
Nor make me traitor to my holy office.
Did not a man's voice ring along the aisle,
'The King is sick and almost unto death'?
How could I excommunicate him then?

ROSAMUND. And wilt thou excommunicate him now?

BECKET. Daughter, my time is short, I shall not do it.
And were it longer — well — I should not do it.

ROSAMUND. Thanks in this life, and in the life to come.

BECKET. Get thee back to thy nunnery with all haste;
Let this be thy last trespass. But one question —
How fares thy pretty boy, the little Geoffrey?
No fever, cough, croup, sickness?

ROSAMUND. No, but saved
From all that by our solitude. The plagues
That smite the city spare the solitudes.

BECKET. God save him from all sickness of the soul!
Thee too, thy solitude among thy nuns,
May that save thee! Doth he remember me?

ROSAMUND. I warrant him.

BECKET. He is marvellously like thee.

ROSAMUND. Liker the King.

BECKET. No, daughter.

ROSAMUND. Ay, but wait
Till his nose rises; he will be very king.

BECKET. Ev'n so: but think not of the King: farewell!

ROSAMUND. My lord, the city is full of armed men.

BECKET. Ev'n so: farewell!

ROSAMUND. I will but pass to vespers,
And breathe one prayer for my liege-lord the King,
His child and mine own soul, and so return.

BECKET. Pray for me too: much need of prayer have I.

[ROSAMUND *kneels and goes*]

Dan John, how much we lose, we celibates,
Lacking the love of woman and of child!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. More gain than loss; for of your wives you shall
Find one a slut whose fairest linen seems
Foul as her dust-cloth, if she used it — one
So charged with tongue, that every thread of thought
Is broken ere it joins — a shrew to boot,
Whose evil song far on into the night
Thrills to the topmost tile — no hope but death;
One slow, fat, white, a burthen of the hearth;

And one that being thwarted ever swoons
And weeps herself into the place of power;
And one an *uxor pauperis Ibyci.*
So rare the household honeymaking bee,
Man's help! but we, we have the blessed Virgin
For worship, and our Mother Church for bride;
And all the souls we saved and father'd here
Will greet us as our babes in Paradise.
What noise was that? she told us of arm'd men
Here in the city. Will you not withdraw?

BECKET. I once was out with Henry in the days
When Henry loved me, and we came upon
A wild-fowl sitting on her nest, so still
I reach'd my hand and touch'd; she did not stir;
The snow had frozen round her, and she sat
Stone-dead upon a heap of ice-cold eggs.
Look! how this love, this mother, runs thro' all
The world God made — even the beast — the bird!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, still a lover of the beast and bird?
But these arm'd men — will you not hide yourself?
Perchance the fierce De Brocs from Saltwood Castle,
To assail our Holy Mother lest she brood
Too long o'er this hard egg, the world, and send
Her whole heart's heat into it, till it break
Into young angels. Pray you, hide yourself.

BECKET. There was a little fair-hair'd Norman maid
Lived in my mother's house: if Rosamund is
The world's rose, as her name imports her — she
Was the world's lily.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, and what of her?

BECKET. She died of leprosy.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. I know not why
You call these old things back again, my lord.

BECKET. The drowning man, they say, remembers all
The chances of his life, just ere he dies.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay — but these arm'd men — will *you* drown *yourself?*
He loses half the meed of martyrdom
Who will be martyr when he might escape.

BECKET. What day of the week? Tuesday?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Tuesday, my lord.

BECKET. On a Tuesday was I born, and on a Tuesday
Baptized; and on a Tuesday did I fly
Forth from Northampton; on a Tuesday pass'd
From England into bitter banishment;
On a Tuesday at Pontigny came to me
The ghostly warning of my martyrdom;
On a Tuesday from mine exile I return'd,
And on a Tuesday —

[TRACY *enters, then* FITZURSE, DE BRITO, *and* DE MORVILLE. MONKS *following*]

— on a Tuesday — Tracy!

[*A long silence broken by* FITZURSE *saying, contemptuously*]

God help thee!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. [*Aside*] How the good Archbishop reddens!
He never yet could brook the note of scorn.

FITZURSE. My lord, we bring a message from the King
Beyond the water; will you have it alone,
Or with these listeners near you?

BECKET. As you will.

FITZURSE. Nay, as *you* will.

BECKET. Nay, as *you* will.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Why then
Better perhaps to speak with them apart.
Let us withdraw.

[*All go out except the four* KNIGHTS *and* BECKET]

FITZURSE. We are all alone with him.
Shall I not smite him with his own cross-staff?

DE MORVILLE. No, look! the door is open: let him be.

FITZURSE. The King condemns your excommunicating —

BECKET. This is no secret, but a public matter.
In here again!

[JOHN OF SALISBURY *and* MONKS *return*]

Now, sirs, the King's commands!

FITZURSE. The King beyond the water, thro' our voices,
Commands you to be dutiful and leal
To your young King on this side of the water,
Not scorn him for the foibles of his youth.
What! you would make his coronation void
By cursing those who crown'd him! Out upon you!

BECKET. Reginald, all men know I loved the Prince.
His father gave him to my care, and I
Became his second father: he had his faults,
For which I would have laid mine own life down
To help him from them, since indeed I loved him,
And love him next after my lord his father.
Rather than dim the splendour of his crown
I fain would treble and quadruple it
With revenues, realms, and golden provinces
So that were done in equity.

FITZURSE. You have broken
Your bond of peace, your treaty with the King —
Wakening such brawls and loud disturbances
In England, that he calls you oversea
To answer for it in his Norman courts.

BECKET. Prate not of bonds, for never, oh, never again
Shall the waste voice of the bond-breaking sea
Divide me from the mother church of England,
My Canterbury. Loud disturbances!
Oh, ay — the bells rang out even to deafening,
Organ and pipe, and dulcimer, chants and hymns
In all the churches, trumpets in the halls,
Sobs, laughter, cries: they spread their raiment down
Before me — would have made my pathway flowers,
Save that it was mid-winter in the street,
But full mid-summer in those honest hearts.

FITZURSE. The King commands you to absolve the bishops
Whom you have excommunicated.

BECKET. I?
Not I, the Pope. Ask *him* for absolution.

FITZURSE. But you advised the Pope.

BECKET. And so I did.
They have but to submit.

THE FOUR KNIGHTS. The King commands you.
We are all King's men.

BECKET. King's men at least should know
That their own King closed with me last July
That I should pass the censures of the Church
On those that crown'd young Henry in this realm,
And trampled on the rights of Canterbury.

FITZURSE. What! dare you charge the King with treachery?
He sanction thee to excommunicate
The prelates whom he chose to crown his son!

BECKET. I spake no word of treachery, Reginald.
But for the truth of this I make appeal
To all the archbishops, bishops, prelates, barons,
Monks, knights, five hundred, that were there and heard.
Nay, you yourself were there: you heard yourself.

FITZURSE. I was not there.

BECKET. I saw you there.

FITZURSE. I was not.

BECKET. You were. I never forget anything.

FITZURSE. He makes the King a traitor, me a liar.
How long shall we forbear him?

JOHN OF SALISBURY [*drawing* BECKET *aside*]. O my good lord,
Speak with them privately on this hereafter.
You see they have been revelling, and I fear
Are braced and brazen'd up with Christmas wines
For any murderous brawl.

BECKET. And yet they prate
Of mine, my brawls, when those, that name themselves
Of the King's part, have broken down our barns,
Wasted our diocese, outraged our tenants,
Lifted our produce, driven our clerics out —
Why they, your friends, those ruffians, the De Brocs,
They stood on Dover beach to murder me,

They slew my stags in mine own manor here,
Mutilated, poor brute, my sumpter-mule,
Plunder'd the vessel full of Gascon wine,
The old King's present, carried off the casks,
Kill'd half the crew, dungeon'd the other half
In Pevensey Castle —

DE MORVILLE. Why not rather then,
If this be so, complain to your young King,
Not punish of your own authority?

BECKET. Mine enemies barr'd all access to the boy.
They knew he loved me.
Hugh, Hugh, how proudly you exalt your head!
Nay, when they seek to overturn our rights,
I ask no leave of king, or mortal man,
To set them straight again. Alone I do it.
Give to the King the things that are the King's,
And those of God to God.

FITZURSE. Threats! threats! ye hear him.
What! will he excommunicate all the world?

[*The* KNIGHTS *come round* BECKET]

DE TRACY. He shall not.

DE BRITO. Well, as yet —
I should be grateful —
He hath not excommunicated *me*.

BECKET. Because thou wast *born* excommunicate.
I never spied in thee one gleam of grace.

DE BRITO. Your Christian's Christian charity!

BECKET. By St. Denis —

DE BRITO. Ay, by St. Denis, now will he flame out,
And lose his head as old St. Denis did.

BECKET. Ye think to scare me from my loyalty
To God and to the Holy Father. No!
Tho' all the swords in England flash'd above me
Ready to fall at Henry's word or yours —
Tho' all the loud-lung'd trumpets upon earth
Blared from the heights of all the thrones of her kings,
Blowing the world against me, I would stand
Clothed with the full authority of Rome,
Mail'd in the perfect panoply of faith,
First of the foremost of their files, who die
For God, to people heaven in the great day
When God makes up his jewels. Once I fled —
Never again, and you — I marvel at you —
Ye know what is between us. Ye have sworn
Yourselves my men when I was Chancellor —
My vassals — and yet threaten your Archbishop
In his own house.

KNIGHTS. Nothing can be between us
That goes against our fealty to the King.

FITZURSE. And in his name we charge you that ye keep
This traitor from escaping.

BECKET. Rest you easy,
For I am easy to keep. I shall not fly.
Here, here, here will you find me.

DE MORVILLE. Know you not
You have spoken to the peril of your life?

BECKET. As I shall speak again.

FITZURSE, DE TRACY, *and* DE BRITO. To arms!

[*They rush out*, DE MORVILLE *lingers*]

BECKET. De Morville,
I had thought so well of you; and even now
You seem the least assassin of the four.
Oh, do not damn yourself for company!
Is it too late for me to save your soul?
I pray you for one moment stay and speak.

DE MORVILLE. Becket, it *is* too late. [*Exit*]

BECKET. Is it too late?
Too late on earth may be too soon in hell.

KNIGHTS [*in the distance*]. Close the great gate — ho, there — upon the town.

BECKET'S RETAINERS. Shut the hall-doors. [*A pause*]

BECKET. You hear them, brother John;
Why do you stand so silent, brother John?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. For I was musing on an ancient saw,
Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re,
Is strength less strong when hand-in-hand with grace?

Gratior in pulchro corpore virtus. Thomas,
Why should you heat yourself for such as these?

BECKET. Methought I answer'd moderately enough.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. As one that blows the coal to cool the fire.
My lord, I marvel why you never lean
On any man's advising but your own.

BECKET. Is it so, Dan John? well, what should I have done?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. You should have taken counsel with your friends
Before these bandits brake into your presence.
They seek — you make — occasion for your death.

BECKET. My counsel is already taken, John.
I am prepared to die.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. We are sinners all,
The best of all not all-prepared to die.

BECKET. God's will be done!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, well. God's will be done!

GRIM [*re-entering*]. My lord, the knights are arming in the garden
Beneath the sycamore.

BECKET. Good! let them arm.

GRIM. And one of the De Brocs is with them, Robert,
The apostate monk that was with Randulf here.
He knows the twists and turnings of the place.

BECKET. No fear!

GRIM. No fear, my lord.

[*Crashes on the hall-doors. The* MONKS *flee*]

BECKET [*rising*]. Our dovecote flown!
I cannot tell why monks should all be cowards.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Take refuge in your own cathedral, Thomas.

BECKET. Do they not fight the Great Fiend day by day?
Valour and holy life should go together.
Why should all monks be cowards?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Are they so?
I say, take refuge in your own cathedral.

BECKET. Ay, but I told them I would wait them here.

GRIM. May they not say you dared not show yourself
In your old place? and vespers are beginning.

[*Bell rings for vespers till end of scene*]

You should attend the office, give them heart.
They fear you slain: they dread they know not what.

BECKET. Ay, monks, not men.

GRIM. I am a monk, my lord.
Perhaps, my lord, you wrong us.
Some would stand by you to the death.

BECKET. Your pardon.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. He said, 'Attend the office.'

BECKET. Attend the office?
Why then — The Cross! — who bears my Cross before me?
Methought they would have brain'd me with it, John. [GRIM *takes it*]

GRIM. I! Would that I could bear thy cross indeed!

BECKET. The Mitre!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Will you wear it? — there!

[BECKET *puts on the mitre*]

BECKET. The Pall!
I go to meet my King!

[*Puts on the pall*]

GRIM. To meet the King!

[*Crashes on the doors as they go out*]

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Why do you move with such a stateliness?
Can you not hear them yonder like a storm,
Battering the doors, and breaking thro' the walls?

BECKET. Why do the heathen rage? My two good friends,
What matters murder'd here, or murder'd there?
And yet my dream foretold my martyrdom
In mine own church. It is God's will. Go on.
Nay, drag me not. We must not seem to fly.

SCENE THIRD. — *North Transept of Canterbury Cathedral.*

[*On the right hand a flight of steps leading to the Choir, another flight on the left, leading to the North Aisle. Winter afternoon slowly darkening. Low thunder now and then of an approaching storm.* MONKS *heard chanting the service.* ROSAMUND *kneeling*]

ROSAMUND. O blessed saint, O glorious Benedict, —
These arm'd men in the city, these fierce faces —

Thy holy follower founded Canterbury —
Save that dear head which now is Canterbury,
Save him, he saved my life, he saved my child,
Save him, his blood would darken Henry's name;
Save him till all as saintly as thyself
He miss the searching flame of purgatory,
And pass at once perfect to Paradise.
[*Noise of steps and voices in the cloisters*]
Hark! Is it they? Coming! He is not here —
Not yet, thank heaven. O save him!
[*Goes up steps leading to choir*]

BECKET [*entering, forced along by* JOHN OF SALISBURY *and* GRIM]. No, I tell you!
I cannot bear a hand upon my person,
Why do you force me thus against my will?

GRIM. My lord, we force you from your enemies.

BECKET. As you would force a king from being crown'd.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. We must not force the crown of martyrdom.
[*Service stops.* MONKS *come down from the stairs that lead to the choir*]

MONKS. Here is the great Archbishop! He lives! he lives!
Die with him, and be glorified together.

BECKET. Together? . . . get you back! go on with the office.

MONKS. Come, then, with us to vespers.

BECKET. How can I come
When you so block the entry? Back, I say!
Go on with the office. Shall not Heaven be served
Tho' earth's last earthquake clash'd the minster-bells,
And the great deeps were broken up again,
And hiss'd against the sun?
[*Noise in the cloisters*]

MONKS. The murderers, hark!
Let us hide! let us hide!

BECKET. What do these people fear?

MONKS. Those arm'd men in the cloister.

BECKET. Be not such cravens!
I will go out and meet them.

GRIM AND OTHERS. Shut the doors!
We will not have him slain before our face.
[*They close the doors of the transept. Knocking*]
Fly, fly, my lord, before they burst the doors! [*Knocking*]

BECKET. Why, these are our own monks who follow'd us!
And will you bolt them out, and have *them* slain?
Undo the doors: the church is not a castle:
Knock, and it shall be open'd. Are you deaf?
What, have I lost authority among you?
Stand by, make way!
[*Opens the doors. Enter* MONKS *from cloister*]
Come in, my friends, come in!
Nay, faster, faster!

MONKS. Oh, my lord Archbishop,
A score of knights all arm'd with swords and axes —
To the choir, to the choir!
[MONKS *divide, part flying by the stairs on the right, part by those on the left. The rush of these last bears* BECKET *along with them some way up the steps, where he is left standing alone*]

BECKET. Shall I too pass to the choir,
And die upon the Patriarchal throne
Of all my predecessors?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. No, to the crypt!
Twenty steps down. Stumble not in the darkness,
Lest they should seize thee.

GRIM. To the crypt? no — no,
To the chapel of St. Blaise beneath the roof!

JOHN OF SALISBURY [*pointing upward and downward*]. That way, or this!
Save thyself either way.

BECKET. Oh, no, not either way, nor any way
Save by that way which leads thro' night to light.
Not twenty steps, but one.
And fear not I should stumble in the darkness,
Not tho' it be their hour, the power of darkness,
But my hour too, the power of light in darkness!
I am not in the darkness but the light,
Seen by the Church in Heaven, the Church on earth —
The power of life in death to make her free!
[*Enter the four* KNIGHTS. JOHN OF SALISBURY *flies to the altar of St. Benedict*]

FITZURSE. Here, here, King's men!
[*Catches hold of the last flying* MONK]
Where is the traitor Becket?

MONK. I am not he! I am not he, my lord.
I am not he indeed!

FITZURSE. Hence to the fiend!
[*Pushes him away*]
Where is this treble traitor to the King?

DE TRACY. Where is the Archbishop, Thomas Becket?

BECKET. Here.
No traitor to the King, but Priest of God, Primate of England.
[*Descending into the transcept*]
I am he ye seek.
What would ye have of me?

FITZURSE. Your life.

DE TRACY. Your life.

DE MORVILLE. Save that you will absolve the bishops.

BECKET. Never, —
Except they make submission to the Church.
You had my answer to that cry before.

DE MORVILLE. Why, then you are a dead man; flee!

BECKET. I will not.
I am readier to be slain, than thou to slay.
Hugh, I know well thou hast but half a heart
To bathe this sacred pavement with my blood.
God pardon thee and these, but God's full curse
Shatter you all to pieces if ye harm
One of my flock!

FITZURSE. Was not the great gate shut?
They are thronging in to vespers — half the town.
We shall be overwhelm'd. Seize him and carry him!
Come with us — nay — thou art our prisoner — come!

DE MORVILLE. Ay, make him prisoner, do not harm the man.
[FITZURSE *lays hold of the* ARCHBISHOP'S *pall*]

BECKET. Touch me not!

DE BRITO. How the good priest gods himself!
He is not yet ascended to the Father.

FITZURSE. I will not only touch, but drag thee hence.

BECKET. Thou art my man, thou art my vassal. Away!
[*Flings him off till he reels almost to falling*]

DE TRACY [*lays hold of the pall*]. Come; as he said, thou art our prisoner.

BECKET. Down!
[*Throws him headlong*]

FITZURSE [*advances with drawn sword*]. I told thee that I should remember thee!

BECKET. Profligate pander!

FITZURSE. Do you hear that? strike, strike.
[*Strikes off the* ARCHBISHOP'S *mitre, and wounds him in the forehead*]

BECKET [*covers his eyes with his hand*].
I do commend my cause to God, the Virgin,
St. Denis of France and St. Alphege of England,
And all the tutelar Saints of Canterbury.
[GRIM *wraps his arms about the* ARCHBISHOP]
Spare this defence, dear brother.
[TRACY *has arisen, and approaches, hesitatingly, with his sword raised*]

FITZURSE. Strike him, Tracy!

ROSAMUND [*rushing down steps from the choir*]. No, No, No, No!

FITZURSE. This wanton here. De Morville,
Hold her away.

DE MORVILLE. I hold her.

ROSAMUND [*held back by* DE MORVILLE, *and stretching out her arms*].
Mercy, mercy,
As you would hope for mercy.

FITZURSE. Strike, I say.

GRIM. O God, O noble knights, O sacrilege!
Strike our Archbishop in his own cathedral!
The Pope, the King, will curse you — the whole world
Abhor you; ye will die the death of dogs!
Nay, nay, good Tracy. [*Lifts his arm*]

FITZURSE. Answer not, but strike.

DE TRACY. There is my answer then.
[*Sword falls on* GRIM'S *arm, and glances from it, wounding* BECKET]

GRIM. Mine arm is sever'd.
I can no more — fight out the good fight — die
Conqueror.
[*Staggers into the chapel of St. Benedict*]

BECKET [*falling on his knees*]. At the right hand of Power —
Power and great glory — for thy Church, O Lord —

Into Thy hands, O Lord — into Thy hands! — [*Sinks prone*]

DE BRITO. This last to rid thee of a world of brawls! [*Kills him*]
The traitor's dead, and will arise no more.

FITZURSE. Nay, have we still'd him? What! the great Archbishop!
Does he breathe? No?

DE TRACY. No, Reginald, he is dead. [*Storm bursts* [1]]

DE MORVILLE. Will the earth gape and swallow us?

DE BRITO. The deed's done —
Away!

[DE BRITO, DE TRACY, FITZURSE, *rush out, crying 'King's men!'* DE MORVILLE *follows slowly. Flashes of lightning thro' the Cathedral.* ROSAMUND *seen kneeling by the body of* BECKET]

[1] A tremendous thunderstorm actually broke over the Cathedral as the murderers were leaving it.

THE MASQUERADERS

(1894)

By Henry Arthur Jones

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

When one is to consider a dramatist, it is perhaps a little inconsistent to spend most of the time estimating him as a critic. But in the career of Henry Arthur Jones, there is undoubtedly no characteristic more forcible than his attitude toward the English drama, and none which gives him a greater right to lead in a movement for its betterment. And, because the ideals of Jones, the critic, have always been put into practice by Jones, the dramatist, it is not surprising to find that the author of "Mrs. Dane's Defence" is more severely criticized by the public for his moral attitude than any other of his immediate contemporaries. Take away from Henry Arthur Jones his critical faculty, based upon live ideas, and he is still as clever in technique as Pinero; add to this stagecraft what you have taken away, and you cannot but conclude that Henry Arthur Jones is the leading figure in the English drama of his generation.

When "The Lie" (1915) was given its première in New York, one felt like re-estimating Henry Arthur Jones, after a quarter of a century. For one detected that this play was cast in the mould of his early period, and gave us the portraiture of a baronet who reflected some of Mr. Jones's philosophy of the changing times. But even though he was out of date, he still proved himself to be a solid credit to the English stage, however much his social conscience was the conscience of an England only slightly touched by democratic problems.

In comparison with the dramatists of the "New Theatre", he is old-fashioned; yet in the British dramatist's break from the past, we must not discount the constructive force of Jones. He never sacrificed sincerity for theatricalism. He has always been interested in the moral philosophy of life. After reading "The Lie", written with vigor and surety of technique, it is profitable to turn to Mr. Jones's early dramas, like "The Middleman" (1889), "Judah" (1890), and "Michael and His Lost Angel" (1896), which were accounted "advanced" when they were first produced, and contrast them with the social problem dramas of the present. What we must realize is that Henry Arthur Jones has his historical position, and that now, rather than accept from him a wider range of sympathy, we necessarily get from him a deeper expression of what he has held to be true in life for many years. Even in his later essays — for Mr. Jones is always writing prefaces and essays on the theatre — he is pleading for permanent things, rather than for experimental things; and he is pleading in the same manner, though with a deeper and more authoritative tone, recognized in the early days when he wrote the preface for "Saints and Sinners" (1884).

Coming, as "The Lie" did, toward the end of the first year of the Great War, it may be taken as marking a definite date in the career of Mr. Jones. But, as he grows older, he does not seem to abate in the ease with which his pen writes dialogue. One turns unreservedly to his delightful "Mary Goes First" (1913), an example of the purest and best High Comedy the modern English drama has produced.

In the history of the English stage, Henry Arthur Jones has reached his position after varied apprenticeship. Born September 28, 1851, he spent his first five years in the village of Grandborough, Buckinghamshire, where his father, Sylvanus Jones, worked a farm. At the grammar school of Winslow he received his education, and when only about thirteen was placed with a commercial firm, even though his tastes were decidedly literary at the time.

One can imagine the difficulties under which he wrote his essays, poems, and stories during this period — none of which brought to him more than the comfort of self-expression.

While visiting a London theatre, in 1870, his resolve to turn playwright was formed, though the immediate activity resulting therefrom was a three-volume novel which, it is said, took some three years to finish. The plot, in after time, found its way into "The Silver King" (1882), a successful melodrama, written in conjunction with Henry Herman. This play won him financial independence, and he was able, thereafter, to turn his attention in other directions.

Jones's first piece, "It's Only Round the Corner" (1878), was produced at the Theatre Royal, Exeter. But it was not until 1881 that he gave up business altogether to devote himself to playwriting.

It is interesting to note that 1882 is the earliest date of any of the lectures and essays in his volume, "The Renascence of the English Drama"; and as Jones, the dramatist, has allowed hardly a year to pass without a new play, so Jones, the critic, has kept pace, and "The Renascence of the English Drama" was followed by "The Foundations of a National Drama", with essays covering the period from 1896–1912.

As an actor Mr. Jones has figured in his own plays — in "A Clerical Error" (1879), for example, with Miss Winifred Emery. As a manager, he presented his "The Crusaders" (1891) at the Avenue Theatre, London. As a critic, he has defended himself from critics — notably in the case of "Saints and Sinners" (1884), the first of his plays to gain marked recognition, and in the facetious dedication to the comedy, "The Case of Rebellious Susan" (1894). "Mrs. Dane's Defence" (1900) marks the culmination of a certain perfection of style. But Jones went even further in his technique, and "Mary Goes First" (1913) is a play whose plot and characterization are less in accord with the demands of the commercial theatre, and more in the rhythm of real literary attainment.

Mr. Jones, fortunately, has been a believer in the printed drama, and he has published the larger number of his plays, sometimes going so far as to issue his dramas before their actual production. This is the case of "The Divine Gift" (1913) and of "The Theatre of Ideas" (1915), wherein is contained that very austere little one-act play of North Cornish life, "Grace Mary", which affords an interesting comparison with John Masefield's "The Tragedy of Nan."

In the long list of his plays, there is but one adaptation — Ibsen's "A Doll's House", called "Breaking a Butterfly" (1884), and given a happy ending. This perpetration on his part was in accord with the demands of the English stage of the time; and Mr. Jones has repudiated what he was forced to do, in the introduction to M. Filon's "The English Stage", wherein he has to say (1896):

> When I came up to London sixteen years ago, to try for a place among English playwrights, a rough translation from the German version of "The Doll's House" was put into my hands, and I was told that if it could be turned

into a sympathetic play, a ready opening would be found for it on the London boards. I knew nothing of Ibsen, but I knew a great deal of Robertson and H. J. Byron. From these circumstances came the adaptation called "Breaking a Butterfly." I pray it may be forgotten from this time, or remembered only with leniency amongst other transgressions of my dramatic youth and ignorance.

Henry Arthur Jones has thrown his energies against the Philistine, and in all of his plays we find only a slight variation of the same theme. He has likewise created a gallery of non-conformist ministers, suggesting in their austerity some of the spiritual atmosphere which he must have observed during his early youth. Both in "Judah" (1890) and in "Michael and His Lost Angel" (1896) his clerical types are definitely fixed in our minds — men with a stoic resolve to confess their sins — for in each instance they are compromised, and in the end show their conventional religious unfitness in their human thirst for life. In "The Hypocrites" (1906), a minister dominates the situation. Mr. Jones has repeated himself too often in his career. In "Judah" and in "The Rogue's Comedy" (1896) we notice a peculiar similarity in the treatment of mental healing and clairvoyance. In "Mrs. Dane's Defence" (1900), "Whitewashing Julia" (1903), and "Joseph Entangles" (1904), he played upon the same string of gossip to show the evil consequences of idle talk. *Mrs Dane*, with her past, was the tragical victim. The heroine, in "Whitewashing Julia", was the culpable conqueror of conventional tongues, and in "Joseph Entangled" an innocent situation was talked up to a point of vital consequences.

It was George Bernard Shaw who wrote about the English drama in this manner:

> The conflict of individuals with law and convention can be dramatized like all other human conflicts; but they are purely judicial; and the fact that we are much more curious about the suppressed relations between the man and the woman than about the relations between both and our courts of law and private juries of matrons, produces that sensation of evasion, of dissatisfaction, of fundamental irrelevance, of shallowness, of useless disagreeableness, of total failure to edify and partial failure to interest. . . .

Both Jones and Pinero are open to this criticism. But, it should be emphasized more than once that ideas, logically followed, without having to resort to the theatrical on all occasions, make Jones greater than Pinero. It is easier to move the *dramatis personæ* into situations than to have the striking situations come from growth or weakness of character. "Mrs. Dane's Defence", while theatrically effective, and dependent, very largely, upon the cross-examination scene of *Sir Daniel Cartaret*, is, none the less, organically sustained, because it is a true exposition of psychology, rather than a theatric handling of stage emotion. We remember, with partial agreement, what George Moore, in his "Impressions and Opinions", said of Mr. Jones:

> I am drawn to sympathize with Mr. Jones's talent because he desires the *new*. He is in touch with modern life and thought; he says almost what he wants to say, and he wants to say far more than any other dramatist, and having obtained a remarkable mastery over that most obstinate vehicle of literary expres-

sion — the stage, one that seems to rebel against all innovation — he introduces into his work far more personal observation of life than any other writer. What, then, is wanting to complete a very real talent? Taste: a vein of commonness degrades, if it does not wholly ruin, his best work.

In "The Theatre of Ideas", Mr. Jones estimates his own work. He speaks of "Saints and Sinners" as the best that he could do at that time. And he claims that he was saved through Matthew Arnold's generous advocacy. His popular success, "The Dancing Girl" (1891), was followed by "The Crusaders" (1891), upon which, as a producing manager, he lavished most of the fortune he had made in the previous play, giving William Morris a free hand in supplying the scenery and furniture. "The Bauble Shop" (1893) followed this. And it was in his mood of light sentimental comedy that he wrote "The Masqueraders" (1894), just previous to "The Case of Rebellious Susan."

Before giving facts regarding the play which has been selected for this volume, it is just as well for us to get clearly in mind Mr. Jones's attitude toward the English theatre. Without his strong stand taken against Philistinism and Mrs. Grundy, the soil out of which more recent social drama in England has come would not have been as well prepared to receive the new growth; nor would the harvest have been as rich. In Mr. Jones's prefaces and essays, we see a slow evolution of ideas. The motto for his intense fight is found in Matthew Arnold's "Irish Essays." Arnold is writing on the French play in London, and is making a plea for a Repertory Theatre. He says, in the course of criticizing the French players, headed by Sarah Bernhardt:

> What then, finally, *are* we to learn from the marvellous success and attractiveness of the performances at the Gaiety Theatre? What *is* the consequence which it is right and rational for us to draw? Surely it is this: "The theatre is irresistible; *organize the theatre.*" Surely, if we wish to stand less in our own way, and to have clear notions of the consequences of things, it is to this conclusion that we should come.

With this injunction sounding in his ears, Jones began writing on the English theatre. And we find him discussing fully the relation between the playhouse and the mob, and the part religion should occupy in drama. He works himself up to a sincere, frenzied moral attitude toward the theatre which we find Matthew Arnold taking towards literature — weighing the right of the public to be amused in the theatre.

> I have fought [writes Mr. Jones] for a recognition of the distinction between the art of the drama on the one hand, and popular amusement on the other. . . . I have fought for the entire freedom of the modern dramatist, for his right to portray all aspects of human life, all passions, all opinions; for the freedom of search, the freedom of phrase, the freedom of treatment, that are allowed to the Bible and to Shakespeare, that must necessarily be allowed to every writer and to every artist that sees humanity as a whole. I have fought for sanity and wholesomeness, for largeness and breadth of view. I have fought against the cramping and deadening influences of modern pessimistic realism; its littleness, its ugliness, its narrowness, its parochial aims.

In his "The Renascence of the English Drama", Mr. Jones asks his readers: if they expect a dramatist to portray, faithfully, a phase of life, should they deny him the right to discuss the religious undercurrent of an age which makes, one way or the other, for character? Because, he concludes, they either believe religion to have become negative as a force, or they fear the consequences of the struggle between challenge and belief.

Again he asks, what should we require in drama? And thereupon he contrasts amusement with fun: the amusement coming from life and the fun evolved from the outward falsifications of life. This naturally brings him to the consideration of the word "dramatic" as opposed to "theatrical."

> Human life [he writes] is a larger thing than the theatre, and the theatre can be powerful only in so far as it recognizes this, and allows the chief things in a play to be not the cheap, mechanical tricks of the playwright, the effective curtains, the machinery of cleverly devised situations, but the study of life and character, the portraiture of the infinitely subtle workings of the human heart.

It is because Mr. Jones has always wanted a wide and searching knowledge of life that we may take the dramas he has written as representative of a new spirit, — different and far more modern than the plays of Robertson or Byron. The fact of the matter is, so sincere has been Jones's search after the human qualities in men and women, that he has never gone so far as Pinero in seeing permanent worth in Robertson. He is more interested in conduct and character. He is more concerned about life outside of the theatre, however much his problem has been to put life into the theatre through dramatic form. He has always sought for rectitude. But, like Pinero, he, too, has compromised. He, too, has declared himself belonging to an older generation by the stand he has taken against the newer realism. Yet his defence of Victorianism was that, however crude the Victorian drama, it had life in it.

It is strange how critics disagree. Jones, while recognizing that Robertson drew one vital tragi-comic figure in *Eccles*, declares that most of the Robertsonian characters and scenes were as false as the falsities and theatricalities he [Robertson] supposed himself to be superseding. P. P. Howe, in his "Dramatic Portraits", lodges almost the same criticism against Jones:

> The dramatist of "The Liars" [he declares], knew the names of all the wines and sauces, but very little about the heart of man.

Every day has its fashion. But not every day creates its masterpiece!

One will find it profitable to study Mr. Jones's position toward National Drama, the Repertory Theatre, and Censorship, and to contrast his essays in "The Foundations of a National Drama" with Archer and Barker's "Schemes and Estimates for a National Theatre."

It cannot be said of Jones that he grew up impervious to the ideas of Ruskin, William Morris, or Matthew Arnold. But he has never developed within himself the deep social conscience that one now finds in Galsworthy. "The Middleman" (1889) is not filled with the irony which would have shown Mr. Jones more in sympathy with the philosophy of labour. He accepted Ruskin and Morris on their intellectual, rather than on their practical, side, with the consequence that none of his

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plays have the moral, social fervour of "Justice" or "The Silver Box." Despite his vitality, Mr. Jones has never been able to escape the limitation of his own education, and this limitation has marked him definitely as part of the social life of England toward the latter part of the nineteenth century.

"The Masqueraders" is not Mr. Jones's best play; it is selected as representative of a period when he was slowly developing his powers. It has been chosen, not in preference to "Michael and His Lost Angel" or "Mrs. Dane's Defence" or "Mary Goes First", but as bringing to the attention of the reader the comedy manner of an earlier period, which is every bit worth while studying. It may not be as permanently representative of Mr. Jones as "The Case of Rebellious Susan", but it has charm and grace, and is an excellent measure of the Jones of the earlier nineties.

William Archer describes "The Masqueraders" as follows:

> "The Crusaders" was a satirical, this is a sentimental, romance. A kindly satire upon social idealisms was the main theme of the earlier play; in the later one, the main theme is an ecstatic love-story, upon which certain patches of satire on social corruption are incidentally embroidered.

It is interesting from the very fact that in some places it is crude, and in other places it has a distinction of style which forecasts the maturer technique of the later plays. In contrast with the sentimental comedies of Robertson and Byron, even of Grundy and Carton, there is, in this play, certain premonition of intellectual independence to be found in Mr. Jones's later plays.

It cannot be claimed for Mr. Jones, the dramatist, that he is a force in drama in the sense that Ibsen is. Though he has been conservative, he has rightly held a brief against the realistic drama as opposed to reality in drama. He had been an enemy to naturalism, as any lover of the ultimate triumph of art would be. He has always shown the dignity of his art by revealing life as greater than the caprice of the dramatist. As a critic, he has moved the dramatic idea forward. That is more than can be said for Pinero. As a philosophical mind must always be somewhat in advance of its environment, so, in a dual rôle, Henry Arthur Jones, the critic, has, throughout his career, always been preparing the road in advance of Henry Arthur Jones, the dramatist. Jones has always been interested in the power of ideas, but though he has fought for the independence of the English stage, he has never been able to escape the limitations of his inherited prejudices and the prejudices of his age.

THE MASQUERADERS

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By HENRY ARTHUR JONES

"I think we had better not tell this story in England, for no one would believe it. — I myself was close to the squadron, and distinctly saw what happened."

LORD ROBERTS, *Forty-one Years in India.*

MY DEAR GEORGE ALEXANDER,

This is one of the many original plays of English authorship that you have successfully produced during your long and honoured management of the St. James' Theatre.

May I gratefully recall our pleasant association during its production, and your striking performance of David Remon, by asking you to accept its dedication in its present form?

Gratefully yours,

HENRY ARTHUR JONES.

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ACT I

Scene — The Courtyard of the Stag Hotel and Assembly Rooms at Crandover.

(Four years pass.)

ACT II

Scene — Drawing-Room at Lady Skene's.

(Nine months pass.)

ACT III

Scene — Private Sitting-Room at the Hotel Prince de Galles, Nice.

ACT IV

Scene — The Observatory on Mont Garidelli, Maritime Alps, near Nice.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

	Produced by Mr. George Alexander, St. James's Theatre, London, April 28, 1894	*Produced by Mr. Charles Frohman, Empire Theatre, New York, December 3, 1894*
David Remon	Mr. George Alexander	Mr. Henry Miller
Sir Brice Skene	Mr. Herbert Waring	Mr. William Faversham
Montagu Lushington . .	Mr. Elliot	Mr. J. E. Dodson
Eddie Remon	Mr. H. V. Esmond	Mr. Joseph Humphreys
The Earl of Crandover, *Master of the Crandover Hunt*	Mr. Ian Robertson	Mr. Guido Marburg
Hon. Percy Blanchflower	Mr. A. Vane-Tempest	Mr. Robert Edeson
Sir Winchmore Wills, M.D.	Mr. Graeme Goring	Mr. W. H. Crompton
George Copeland	Mr. Ben Webster	Mr. R. Weed
Fancourt	Mr. Arthur Royston	Mr. Jameson Lee Finney
Carter	Mr. Guy Lane-Coulson	Mr. Charles Crosby
Randall	Mr. J. A. Bentham	Mr. J. B. Hollis
Rodney	Mr. F. Kinsey Peile	Mr. Edgar Norton
Sharland	Mr. A. Bromley-Davenport	Mr. J. P. Sorentz
Jimmy Stokes, *an old huntsman*	Mr. William H. Day	Mr. William H. Thompson
Brinkler, *proprieter of "The Stag"*	Mr. Alfred Holles	Mr. E. Y. Backus
Thomson	Mr. F. Loftus	Mr. James Whitman
A Servant	Mr. Theo Stewart	Mr. Henry Damon
Dulcie Larondie	Mrs. Patrick Campbell	Miss Viola Allen
Helen Larondie, *her sister* .	Miss Granville	Miss Alice Fischer
Charley Wishanger, *afterwards Lady Shalford* . . .	Miss Irene Vanbrugh	Miss Elsie de Wolfe
Lady Clarice Reindean, *Lord Crandover's daughter* .	Miss Beryl Faber	Miss Ida Conquest
Lady Crandover	Mrs. Edward Saker	Miss Genevieve Reynolds

Guests, Dancers, Fox-hunters, Hotel Servants, and Waiters

THE MASQUERADERS

ACT I

SCENE. — *The old courtyard of the Stag Hotel and Assembly Rooms at Crandover, roofed in to form a hall.*

[*Along right is a bar-counter, surmounted by a glass casement and windows, which open and shut down on to the counter. In the middle of the counter is a lid, which lifts up and forms doorway. At the back are steps leading to the Crandover Assembly Rooms. On the left the large old-fashioned gateway of the Inn. Running all round are the old galleries remaining from coaching times. Plants and banners hung about the hall. On the outside of bar is hung a subscription list, in which the words "Widow and Orphans" and "Dick Ramsden" are discernible. Dancing in the rooms beyond. Amongst the company are* LORD CRANDOVER, LADY CRANDOVER, LADY CLARICE REINDEAN, CHARLEY WISHANGER. MONTAGU LUSHINGTON, *a modern young man, is coming downstairs*]

LORD CRANDOVER [*a jovial English aristocrat of about fifty speaks to* BRINKLER]. Devilish rum start this of Miss Larondie's, Brinkler.

BRINKLER [*with a grin*]. Yes, my lord.

LORD CRANDOVER. Where is she?

BRINKLER [*pointing off into the bar*]. In the bar there.

[*They all look off, and show great interest.* MONTAGU LUSHINGTON *joins the group*]

CHARLEY [*a very fast, mannish little woman, to* MONTAGU]. Not bad, eh?

MONTY. Exquisite. That divine poise of the arm as she draws the handle of the beer machine is really quite priceless.

LORD CRANDOVER. Does she bring you much business, Brinkler?

BRINKLER. Well, she's brought me two good customers, my lord.

LORD CRANDOVER. Who are they?

BRINKLER. One of them is Sir Brice Skene, my lord.

[LADY CRANDOVER *exchanges a look with* LADY CLARICE]

LADY CRANDOVER. Is Sir Brice often here?

[LADY CLARICE *is showing interest*]

BRINKLER. He's almost lived here lately, my lady.

LADY CLARICE. [*To* LADY CRANDOVER, *aside, bitterly*] What did I tell you?

LORD CRANDOVER. Who's the other customer?

BRINKLER. That mad gentleman that lives at Gerard's Heath, Mr. Remon. There he is in the bar now.

[*They all look off, and show great interest*]

MONTY. That pale individual who is dallying with claret in the corner?

BRINKLER. Yes; that's sixty-nine Mouton Rothschild. I get it specially for him. Fancy drinking Mouton Rothschild!

CHARLEY. The man's looking at us.

[SIR BRICE *enters from ball-room, comes down gradually to group*]

LORD CRANDOVER. He's an astronomer, isn't he?

BRINKLER. I believe he is something in that line, my lord. And he's got a little brother who is likewise touched.

MONTY. With the stars, or the barmaid?

BRINKLER. Miss Larondie isn't exactly a barmaid, is she, my lord?

LORD CRANDOVER. No; her mother was distantly related to the Skenes. Her father came of a good old French family.

LADY CRANDOVER. The girl might have done well for herself. We used

to receive her family at the Court and when her father died I interested myself to get her a situation as a governess in a Christian family. But she behaved very badly.

MONTY. When one is a governess in a Christian family, one is compelled to behave badly for the sake of the higher morality.

LADY CRANDOVER. Miss Larondie had thoroughly lost caste. And I should take it as a great favour if Mr. Brinkler would see that she has no chance of — of misconducting herself with —

[SIR BRICE *has come up, and* LADY CRANDOVER *stops embarrassed when she sees him*]

SIR BRICE. With whom? Is Miss Larondie about to misconduct herself, Brinkler?

BRINKLER. No, Sir Brice, I trust not.

SIR BRICE. [*To* LADY CRANDOVER] Have you any reason for supposing that Miss Larondie is about to misconduct herself, Lady Crandover?

LADY CRANDOVER [*embarrassed*]. I — I am surprised, Sir Brice —

SIR BRICE. Have you any reason for supposing that Miss Larondie is about to misconduct herself?

LADY CRANDOVER. No.

SIR BRICE [*politely*]. Thank you.

[*Goes off into the bar. In crossing the bar he has to pass* LADY CLARICE, *he bows to her with extreme politeness, she bites her lips, and returns his bow. Exit* SIR BRICE *into bar*]

LADY CLARICE. [*To her mother, aside*] Oh, I can't bear it!

LADY CRANDOVER. Hush!

LADY CLARICE. He has gone to that girl.

[*The next dance begins. The stage gradually clears*]

CHARLEY. Our dance, Monty.

MONTY [*giving arm*]. So your vestal self is dedicate to matrimony and Sir Digby Shalford?

CHARLEY. Yes; he's a trifle washed out; but we are frightfully hard up, and you didn't ask me.

MONTY. My dear Charley, marriage is the last insult one offers to a woman whom one respects. Love if you please —

CHARLEY. Thanks. We'll think about it. By the way, you'll stand a chance with Clarice now Sir Brice has cut her. Her connections would be useful to you.

MONTY. What would Crandover settle on her?

CHARLEY. Not much. Clarice would tell me. I'll ask her. What would you do it for? A thousand a year?

MONTY [*reproachfully*]. My dear Charley, don't hurt my self-respect.

[*They go into the ball-room*]

[*Enter* EDDIE REMON, *a delicate boy of about twenty, highly refined, overstrung, unbalanced. He is followed by* GEORGE COPELAND, *a bearded, athletic man about forty*]

COPELAND. But what's he doing here?

EDDIE. Sun-gazing.

COPELAND. Sun-gazing?

EDDIE. Yes. Look! Here's his sun. She's dragging him through space, and where the devil they're going to, I don't know.

[*Enter* DULCIE LARONDIE *from bar*]

DULCIE [*speaking off into the outer bar. She has a large key in her hand*]. I've forgotten the candle. Sir Brice, would you mind bringing me that candle?

[DAVID REMON *enters from bar, with the lighted candle in his hand. He is a man of about forty, pale, studious, philosophic-looking.* SIR BRICE *follows quickly, and the two men stand facing each other*]

SIR BRICE. Give me that candle.

DAVID. Miss Larondie —

[*Appealing to* DULCIE]

DULCIE [*stands coquettishly looking at both of them*]. That one shall light me to the cellar who makes himself the most ridiculous over it.

DAVID [*coming towards her*]. That will be myself.

SIR BRICE. Give me that candle.

DULCIE. Sir Brice, Mr. Remon will make himself far more ridiculous than you.

SIR BRICE. Then let him light you.

[*Exit into bar.* REMON *is carrying the candle perfectly straight in his hands.* DULCIE *turns to him*]

DULCIE. You're carrying that candle on one side; you're dropping the grease. [*He looks at her, holds it much on one side, and drops the grease*] That's better.

[*She stands a moment or two looking him up and down with comic inspection*] Yes, I think that will do. You look very well. Would you mind waiting here till I come back?

[*Gravely blows out the candle, and exit.* DAVID *stands there. Pause.* COPELAND *comes behind him, claps him on the shoulder*]

COPELAND. Davy!

DAVID [*turns round, cordially*]. My dear fellow! [*Very warm hand-shaking*] You're coming to stay?

COPELAND. No, to say good-bye. I catch the night mail back, and to-morrow I'm off to Alaska. I'm sick of this nineteenth-century civilisation. I must do a bit of climbing, and get myself re-oxidised.

DAVID. What is it this time?

COPELAND. Mount Saint Elias, 18,000 feet high, and snow at the sea-level.

EDDIE. Davy, your bottle of claret is here in the bar.

DAVID. But Miss Larondie has not come back from the cellar.

EDDIE. She came up the other stairs. She's in the bar talking to Sir Brice Skene. [*The band strikes up a very bright dance-tune.* EDDIE *puts his fingers in his ears*] Oh! oh! oh! Those wretched musicians!

COPELAND. What's the matter?

EDDIE. They are playing horribly in tune, as if the world were full of harmony. I must get a tin kettle and put them out.

[DAVID *goes up to the bar, shows intense mortification, conquers it. Exit* EDDIE *into ball-room.* DAVID *calls* "Brinkler"]

[BRINKLER *enters with a bottle and glasses*]

DAVID. Brinkler, my claret here.

[BRINKLER *brings bottle in cradle and two glasses, puts them down on the other side of stage*]

BRINKLER. Mouton Rothschild, sixty-nine.

DAVID. So I'm mad to drink the finest vintages, eh Brinkler? [BRINKLER *looks surprised*] I heard you say so.

BRINKLER. Well, it is unusual, sir.

DAVID. You're right. A man must be mad who drinks the rarest wines when he can get salted beer and doctored gin. Still, you must humour me, Brinkler. [BRINKLER *seems puzzled*] Though what's the good of climbing Mount Elias, I don't know.

[*Turning to* COPELAND]

COPELAND. To get to the top of it.

DAVID. But what's the good of getting to the top of it?

COPELAND. What's the good of getting to the top of anything? You've spent the last dozen years of your life and nearly blinded yourself to solve the mystery of sun-spots.

DAVID. But sun-spots are practical.

COPELAND. Practical?

DAVID. Who solves the mystery of sun-spots may show the way to control the future harvests of the world; and who controls the harvests of the world will provide cheaper swipes and smaller beer for Brinkler's grandchildren, eh, Brinkler?

BRINKLER [*comes forward*]. Sir?

DAVID. I was saying that the elect of the earth, and by the elect of the earth I mean every man who has a vote, may get cheaper swipes when I have solved my problem of sun-spots.

BRINKLER. Sir?

DAVID. Your grandchildren shall be amply provided for, Brinkler. [*Turns to* COPELAND] Drink. [*Exit* BRINKLER *puzzled*] A prosperous voyage and a safe return, old fellow. [*Drinks*] I've drunk to your folly, now drink to mine.

COPELAND. Tell me all about it, Davy. It is folly, then?

DAVID. No, if folly is happiness, folly is the greatest wisdom.

COPELAND. You are happy, then?

DAVID [*nods*]. Yes. And wretched, beyond all telling.

COPELAND. Why?

DAVID. I shall never win her. She'll never be mine, George. And if she were, — that might be the saddest thing of all.

COPELAND. How?

DAVID. When the desired one becomes the possessed one, her beauty fades. I love her, George, and I want to keep on loving her. [COPELAND *laughs*] Laugh at me! I laugh at myself. I was forty-two last August. You know pretty much what my life has been. Drink one glass, old boy, to the days when we were twenty-five, and to our old loves.

COPELAND [*drinks*]. Our old loves. Your last one, Davy?

DAVID. Ah! She soured me, but she didn't break my heart. And she drove me to my sun-spots. So God

bless her! God bless them all! Whatever I've been in practice, George, in theory I've always had the most perfect loyalty to womankind of any man that ever breathed. [COPELAND *laughs*] Don't laugh, you rascal! I meant it! I've always kept my reverence for them, and I've always known that some day or the other I should meet one who would make me worship her with the purest devotion a man can feel for a woman.

COPELAND. And you have met her?

DAVID [*nods, looking towards bar*]. She's in there, flirting with the choicest blackguard in England.

COPELAND. You poor dear fool! You always would pay half-a-crown for anything you could get for twopence.

DAVID. Yes, but I always knew what a fool I was. Do you think I don't know what a fool I am now? George, it's not any empress, not any goddess, but just that girl in the bar there that owns me body and soul.

COPELAND. Pack up your traps and come to Alaska and forget her.

DAVID [*hand on his heart*]. She's packed herself here, and here she'll lie snug and warm till all grows cold. [*Looking over to bar*] And that blackguard is talking to her!

COPELAND. Who is he?

DAVID. Sir Brice Skene.

COPELAND. The racing man?

DAVID. Yes. He's rich. George, if he —

COPELAND. If he — what?

DAVID. He shook hands with her last night. When his finger-tips touched hers, I felt I could kill him, George. And if he — if he — No, I wrong her! She's a good woman. And yet, damn him, he has twenty thousand a year —

COPELAND. Is it a question of money?

DAVID. What do you mean?

COPELAND. I've not a single near relation in the world. My father left me, I suppose, from two to three hundred thousand pounds. [*Holds out hand*] Davy, say the word —

DAVID. No, George.

COPELAND. Why should you hesitate?

DAVID. I don't want it. I've just enough for my wants. I've only Eddie to provide for. And I've only one extravagance. [*Tapping the bottle*] I love good wine, and plenty — not too much — of it.

COPELAND. But if you were rich — perhaps she —

DAVID. Thanks, George; I won't buy her.

COPELAND. You're welcome.

DAVID. I know it.

COPELAND. By Jove, I've only just time to catch the mail. Good-bye, Davy. [*They stand hand in hand for some moments*] I've left a couple of thousand at Coutts' in your name.

DAVID. I sha'n't use it.

COPELAND. As you please.

DAVID. How long shall you be away?

COPELAND. I sha'n't come back till I've stood on Mount Saint Elias. Can I do anything for you?

DAVID. Yes. Tell me the quality of the moonshine on the top.

COPELAND. The same quality as your moonshine here, and just as real.

DAVID. Is anything real? [*Looking at the fox-hunters and dancers*] I've lived so long alone with only Eddie that the world has grown quite spectral to me. Look at these phantoms! [*Pointing to the fox-hunters and dancers*] Is anything real, George?

COPELAND. Yes; that two thousand at Coutts'.

DAVID. And friendship. Friendship is real, isn't it? [*Shaking hands*] God bless you, George. I'll come to the station with you.

[*As he is going off* DULCIE *enters from bar*, SIR BRICE SKENE *following her*]

DAVID [*sees her*]. No! [*Shakes hands*] Don't break your neck over Mount Saint Elias!

COPELAND. Don't break your heart over a woman!

DAVID. Yes, I shall. After all I'm only playing at life, and so I'll break my heart over her — in play.

COPELAND. Stick to your sun-spots! [*Exit*]

SIR BRICE [*catching sight of the subscription list*]. What a confounded lot of widows and orphans there are in the world!

DAVID [*sitting on the other side*]. Miss Larondie is an orphan.

DULCIE. Yes, or I shouldn't be here. I wonder why all we superfluous women were sent into the world!

SIR BRICE [*leaning on the bar*]. You are not superfluous. You are indispensable.

DULCIE. To whom?

SIR BRICE. To me.

DULCIE [*makes a profound mock curtsy*]. You do me proud. [*Calls to* DAVID] Mr. Remon, can you tell me why I was sent into the world?

DAVID. To be indispensable to Sir Brice Skene.

SIR BRICE. [*Aside to* DULCIE] Why do you talk to that fellow?

DULCIE. [*Aside to* SIR BRICE] Oh, he amuses me. I can make such a fool of him, and — I'm so sick of this.

SIR BRICE. I'll send you my new mare on Friday. Come to the meet.

DULCIE. I daren't. What would everybody say?

SIR BRICE. What does it matter? I'll send you the mare.

DULCIE. No. They'd all cut me. Would your sister chaperon me? You know she wouldn't.

SIR BRICE. My dear — you've made an awful mistake.

DULCIE. Don't call me your dear. I won't have it.

SIR BRICE [*with a little laugh*]. My dear, you've made an awful mistake, and there's only one way out of it.

DULCIE. I don't wish to get out of it. Let them laugh at me, and cut me. I can bear it.

SIR BRICE. Don't be a fool. If I were to offer you — [*In a low voice*]

DULCIE [*stops him*]. No. Pray don't. I sha'n't take it.

SIR BRICE [*bending nearer to her*]. But if I were to offer you —

DAVID. [*To* SIR BRICE] Will you give me those matches, please?

SIR BRICE. Take them.

[*Enter* JIMMY STOKES, *an old huntsman in an old hunting suit*]

DULCIE. Oh, Jimmy Jimmy Stokes, I'm so glad to see you! How are you, Jimmy Jimmy Stokes?

JIMMY [*beaming old fellow of about seventy*]. Oh, I'm just tol-lol, miss, for a hold 'un. How's yourself, miss?

DULCIE. Oh, this isn't myself, Jimmy. Myself's dead and buried, and when I come back to life I shall find this queer creature has been playing all sorts of mad pranks in my absence. Sit down, Jimmy Jimmy Stokes, and put a name on it.

JIMMY. Well, just a little wee drop of gin, miss, if I ain't intruding.

DULCIE. Intruding, Jimmy? You ought to be welcome at any meet of the Crandover.

JIMMY. Head whip five-and-thirty years, I was. And thinks I, I'll look in to-night. So I washes myself up, putts on my old whip's coat, and here I be as bold as brass. You see, miss, I be a privileged party, I be. Thank you, miss — Woa, woa, miss — woa!

[SIR BRICE *and* DAVID *have been sitting at table, looking at each other*]

SIR BRICE. You spoke?

DAVID. No.

[*The look is continued for some moments*]

SIR BRICE [*folds his arms over the table, leans over them to* DAVID]. What the devil do you mean?

DAVID [*folds his arms over the table so that they meet* SIR BRICE'S, *leans over them so that the two men's faces almost touch*]. I mean to kill you if you dishonour her.

SIR BRICE. You'll kill me?

DAVID. I'll kill you.

SIR BRICE. I'll have her one way or the other.

DAVID. You're warned.

[SIR BRICE *rises, goes towards* DULCIE, *is about to speak to her.* DAVID *turns round and looks at him.* SIR BRICE *stops, calls out to* DULCIE, *who is talking over the bar to* JIMMY STOKES]

SIR BRICE. Miss Larondie, I'll send you the mare on Friday.

[DULCIE *shakes her head,* SIR BRICE *looks at* DAVID *and exit*]

JIMMY. Well, here's luck to you, miss, and I wish I could see you going across the country with the C. H. as you used — that's all the harm I wish you, for you was a sweet, pretty figure on horseback, you was, and you rode straight, you and your father, wire and all — you rode straight.

DULCIE. Don't remind me of old times, Jimmy. [*Turns to* DAVID *mischievously*] Mr. Remon, it's getting late. Isn't it time you were going?

DAVID [*rises*]. Good-night.

DULCIE. Good-night. [*As he is passing out to door she calls out to him again*] Mr. Remon — [DAVID *stops*] I've something to say to you.

DAVID [*coming to her*]. What is it?

DULCIE [*tapping her forehead impatiently*]. It's gone! Would you mind waiting there till I think what it is?

DAVID. Certainly.

DULCIE. That's so good of you. [*Looks him up and down a little while*

mischievously] Can I give you a book while you wait? Here's "Bradshaw," the "Turf Guide," this week's "Sporting Times."

DAVID. I shouldn't understand it. I'll look at you.

DULCIE. Do you understand me?

DAVID. Perfectly.

DULCIE. I don't understand you.

DAVID. You will some day.

[*The dance has finished, and a crowd of young men dancers,* FANCOURT, CARTER, RANDALL, RODNEY, SHARLAND, *come chattering and laughing to the bar, and shout for drinks together*]

FANCOURT. I say, Miss Larondie, I'm dying for a whisky and soda.

CARTER. Lemon squash.

RANDALL. A baby bottle of jump.

RODNEY. Brandy and soda.

FANCOURT. Don't serve him, Miss Larondie. He's three parts squiffy already.

RODNEY. Shut up, Fan.

SHARLAND. A gin cocktail, Miss Larondie, and I'll show you how to mix it.

FANCOURT. Don't trust him, miss. He wants to sneak a sample of your spirits for the public analyst.

RODNEY. Serve me first, Miss Larondie, and I'll give you a guinea for Dick Ramsden's widow.

[*General hubbub and clatter*]

DULCIE. Order, order, gentlemen! Jimmy Stokes, take this gentleman's guinea and go round with this list, and see what you can get for poor Dick's family.

[JIMMY *takes the subscription list, and is seen to go round with it to several of the bystanders, and talk to them in dumb show*]

FANCOURT. I'll go behind and help you, miss.

[*Lifts up the lid of the counter, and tries to push in*]

RODNEY [*pushing him back*]. Sling, you animal! I'm going to be under-barmaid here.

[*They both push in behind the bar*]

FANCOURT. No, you don't. Now, gents, your orders, and no larking with us poor unprotected females.

[*Putting his arm round* DULCIE'S *waist*]

[HELEN LARONDIE *enters and stands watching* DULCIE]

DULCIE [*indignantly to* FANCOURT]. How dare you?

RODNEY [*on the other side, puts his arm round her waist — to* FANCOURT]. How dare you?

DULCIE [*disengaging herself indignantly*]. Pass out! Do you hear? Pass out! [*Showing them the way out. Sees* HELEN *standing there, shows great shame*] Nell!

FANCOURT [*seizes* RODNEY *by the collar and runs him out*]. Pass out! Do you hear? Pass out!

[*Runs him out of the bar*]

BRINKLER. Gentlemen! Gentlemen! If you please! gentlemen! If you please!

DULCIE. Mr. Brinkler, my sister has come for me. Would you mind waiting on these gentlemen?

[*They clamour round* BRINKLER, *repeating their orders for drinks.* DULCIE *goes to her sister*]

DULCIE. Nell! [*Kisses her*]

HELEN. My dear.

DULCIE. Come and talk to me. [*Takes her up to where* DAVID *is standing. She catches sight of* DAVID, *who has been watching the scene with a mixture of bitterness and amusement. Seeing* DAVID] Mr. Remon — I had forgotten you.

DAVID. You had such pleasant companions.

DULCIE. I have wasted your time.

DAVID. It's of no value.

DULCIE. But I'm afraid I've made you rather foolish.

DAVID. In a world of fools it's a distinction to play the fool for you. In a world of shadows, what does it matter what part one plays? Good-night.

DULCIE. No, come again.

DAVID. It's nearly closing time.

DULCIE. But we shall be late to-night. Come again by and by.

DAVID. By and by. [*Exit*]

HELEN. Who is that?

DULCIE. His name's Remon. He has haunted the place for the last month. He's in love with me. I can make him do any foolish thing I please. [BRINKLER *serves the young men with drinks. The music strikes up again, and they gradually go off, leaving the stage with only* DULCIE *and* HELEN *on it*] Nell, I'm so glad — what makes you come so late?

HELEN [*a soft-voiced, gentle woman of about thirty, in a nurse's dress*]. I've just had a telegram to go and nurse a typhoid case at Moorbrow, so I sha'n't

see you for a few weeks. You still like it here?

Dulcie [*rather defiantly*]. Yes. It's livelier than being a governess, and it isn't so horrid as nursing typhoid.

Helen [*smiling*]. Dear, there's nothing horrid about nursing. It's just like a mother and her baby.

Dulcie. How awful sweet *that* must be. [*Looking at her sister*] How patiently you take our comedown, Nell. Instead of rebelling and hating everybody as I do, you've just gone and nursed all these dirty people and made yourself quite happy over it.

Helen. I've found out the secret of living.

Dulcie. What's that?

Helen. Forget yourself. Deny yourself. Renounce yourself. It's out of the fashion just now. But some day the world will hear that message again.

Dulcie [*looking at* Helen *with admiration*]. I wish I was good like you, Nell. No, I don't. I don't want to deny myself, or renounce myself, or forget myself. I want to enjoy myself, and to see life. That's why I screwed up my courage and answered Brinkler's advertisement, and came here.

Helen. And are you enjoying yourself?

Dulcie [*defiantly*]. Yes, after a fashion. I wish I was a man, or one of those girls upstairs. Why should they have all the pleasure and happiness of life?

Helen. You're sure they have all the pleasure and happiness of life?

Dulcie. At any rate they've got what I want. Oh, how I long for life! How I could enjoy it! Hark! [*Dance music swells*] Isn't that dance maddening? I must dance! [*Begins*] Oh, Nell, I was made for society! Oh, for London! for pleasure! To be somebody in the world! How I would worship any man who would raise me to a position! And wouldn't I repay him? What parties I'd give! I'd have all London at my feet! I could do it! I know I could! Oh, is there anybody who will take me out of this dead-alive hole and give me the life I was made for?

[*Flings herself wildly round, half dancing, and drops her head into* Helen's *lap sobbing*]

Helen [*stroking* Dulcie's *hair very softly*]. My poor Dulcie! I knew you weren't happy here.

Dulcie. I hate it! I hate it! Nell, don't be surprised if I do something desperate before long.

Helen. Dulcie, you'll do nothing wrong.

[*Lifting up* Dulcie's *head, looking keenly at her*]

Dulcie. What do you mean? Nell, you know I wouldn't. Kiss me, ducky. Say you know I wouldn't.

Helen [*kisses her*]. I don't think you would, but — when I came in and saw those two men —

Dulcie [*quickly*]. Boys. They meant nothing. One has to put up with a good deal here. Men aren't nice creatures.

Helen. Dulcie, you must come away from this.

Dulcie. Where? What can I do? I wish somebody would marry me. What wouldn't I give to cut Lady Clarice as she cut me to-night!

Helen. Did she cut you?

Dulcie. Yes. She gave me one look — Nell, if she looks at me again like that, I don't care what happens, I shall box her ears.

Helen. Dulcie!

Dulcie. But if she cuts me, Sir Brice has cut her. And he pays me no end of attention.

Helen. You're not growing friendly with Sir Brice?

Dulcie. No — yes — he's always paying me compliments, and asking me to take presents.

Helen. You haven't taken his presents?

Dulcie. No. Don't fear, Nell, I'll take nothing from him except — if he were really fond of me, I'd marry him, Nell.

Helen. No, dear no. He's not a good man.

Dulcie. Nell, there ain't any good men left in the world. The race is extinct. I daresay Sir Brice is as good as the rest, and if he were to ask me I should say "yes." [Helen *shakes her head*] Yes, I should, Nell. And I should make him a good wife, Nell, for there are the makings of a good wife in me. I should say "yes," and oh, wouldn't I like to see Lady Clarice's face when she hears the news.

Helen. I hope he won't ask you, Dulcie.

Dulcie. Stranger things have happened.

Helen. I must be going. I've to watch a fever case to-night.

DULCIE [*twining* HELEN'S *arms round her neck*]. I wish I could have a fever.

HELEN. Dulcie!

DULCIE. It would be so lovely to be nursed by you. [*Hugging her*] I shall never love a man as I love you, Nell. But I suppose that's a different kind of love. [HELEN *sighs*] What makes you sigh?

HELEN. Good-bye, Dulcie.

DULCIE. Good-bye, you dear, nice, soft, warm, comforting thing. You're as good as a boa, or a muff, or a poultice to me. I'll let you out this way. It's nearer for you.

[*Exeunt* HELEN *and* DULCIE *through bar*]

[SIR BRICE *enters from ball-room, followed by* LADY CRANDOVER, LADY CLARICE *following.* LADY CLARICE *goes and sits down quite apart*]

LADY CRANDOVER. Sir Brice! [SIR BRICE *turns, stops.* LADY CRANDOVER *somewhat embarrassed*]. Do you know what people are saying of you?

SIR BRICE. I haven't an idea. But whatever it is, don't stop them.

LADY CRANDOVER. Sir Brice. All through the season you have paid the most marked attention to Clarice.

SIR BRICE. I admire Lady Clarice immensely. I have a very ingenuous nature, and perhaps I allowed it to become too apparent.

LADY CRANDOVER. You allowed it to become so apparent that every one in the county supposed as an honourable man —

SIR BRICE. Ah, that's a nice point, isn't it? If Crandover thinks I have behaved dishonourably, the Englishman's three remedies are open to him — he can write a letter to the "Times," or he can bring an action, or — he can horsewhip me. Personally, I'm indifferent which course he takes. Excuse me. [*Goes off into the bar*]

LADY CRANDOVER [*enraged and almost in tears, goes to* CLARICE]. My dear, he's a brute! What an awful life his wife will have!

LADY CLARICE. Then why did you run after him? Why did you let me encourage him?

LADY CRANDOVER. Clarice, he has twenty thousand a year.

LADY CLARICE. But everybody says he'll run through it in a few years. He lost fifty thousand on the Leger alone.

LADY CRANDOVER. I know. Oh yes, he'll soon get through it. Well, now you've lost him, it's a great comfort to think what a perfect brute he is. You've had a lucky escape.

[DULCIE *re-enters from bar.* JIMMY *re-enters with subscription list*]

LADY CLARICE [*watching* DULCIE]. Yes, but I don't like being thrown aside for that miss there.

DULCIE. What luck, Jimmy? [JIMMY *shakes his head.* DULCIE *takes the subscription list from him*] Oh, Jimmy Jimmy Stokes, when we keep a Punch and Judy show, I'll never send you round with the hat.

JIMMY. Ah, miss, we know how you could get a peck of money for 'em — don't we, Mr. Fancourt?

FANCOURT. By Jove, yes. Jimmy has made a splendid suggestion, Miss Larondie. The only question is, will you agree to it?

DULCIE. What is it, Jimmy?

JIMMY. You back me up, miss, that's all, will you?

DULCIE. Certainly. Anything to keep Mrs. Ramsden and her chickabiddies out of the workhouse. I always feel, you know, Jimmy, that it was through me that Dick was killed.

FANCOURT. Through you, Miss Larondie?

DULCIE. I was leading across Drubhill. I took the drop into the road. Dick was next behind. His horse stumbled and [*shudders*] they picked him up dead.

[*All the young fellows have crowded around and listen*]

JIMMY. 'Twas me as picked him up, if you remember, miss, and took him home, I did, ah, it's three years ago last February, yes, and I broke the news to his wife, I did, and what's more, I helped to lay Dick out, I did, and I says to his wife, "Don't take on now, you foolish woman," I says, "why," I says, "it might have been *felo-de-se*." But it were a nasty drop jump, miss, a nasty drop jump.

DULCIE. And if I hadn't taken it, perhaps Dick might have been alive now.

JIMMY. Not he, not he. Dick'd have drunk himself to death before this. He was a royal soul, Dick was. And if you'll only back me up, we'll raise a

little fortune for Mrs. Ramsden in no time.

DULCIE. Very well, Jimmy. But what is this plan, eh, Mr. Fancourt?

FANCOURT. Tell her, Jimmy. You started it.

JIMMY. Well, miss, seeing all these young gents here, it struck me as, human nature being what it is, and no getting over it, no offence I hope to anybody, but if you was to offer to sell one, mind you, only one, of your kisses to the highest bidder —

DULCIE [*indignantly*]. What?

MONTY. A very excellent and original suggestion!

DULCIE. The idea! What nonsense!

FANCOURT. Nonsense? I call it a jolly good idea.

SHARLAND. Splendid! By Jove, we'll carry it out too.

DULCIE. Indeed we won't. Jimmy, give me that list. [*Takes the subscription list from* JIMMY] Mr. Fancourt will give me something, I'm sure.

FANCOURT. I should be delighted, but [*nudging* SHARLAND] fact is, I've promised Sharland I wouldn't give anything except on the conditions Jimmy Stokes has just laid down.

DULCIE. Mr. Sharland.

SHARLAND. Very sorry, Miss Larondie, but fact is [*nudging* FANCOURT] I've promised Fancourt I wouldn't give anything except on the conditions Jimmy Stokes has laid down.

[DULCIE *turns away indignantly, sees* LADY CRANDOVER *and* LADY CLARICE, *hesitates a moment, then goes somewhat defiantly to them*]

DULCIE. Lady Crandover, may I beg you for a small subscription to Dick Ramsden's widow and children?

LADY CRANDOVER [*very coolly*]. I always leave such things to Lord Crandover. [*Turns away*]

DULCIE. Perhaps Lady Clarice —

LADY CRANDOVER. I thought I heard some one propose a way in which you could raise some money.

SIR BRICE [*coming from bar*]. Raise some money? What's the matter here?

FANCOURT. Jimmy Stokes has just proposed that Miss Larondie should benefit the Dick Ramsden fund by selling a kiss by auction.

SIR BRICE. What does Miss Larondie say?

DULCIE. Impossible!

MONTY. Not in the least. If you will allow me, gentlemen, I will constitute myself auctioneer. [*To* DULCIE] I beg you will place yourself entirely in my hands, Miss Larondie. Trust to my tact to bring this affair to a most successful issue. After all, it's not so indelicate as slumming.

DULCIE. No, no!

MONTY. Allow me. A rostrum. Rodney, you are my clerk. That wine case. [*A wine case is brought forward from side*] And that barrel, if please. A hammer. [*A large mallet, such as is used for hammering bungs in beer barrels is given to him*]. Thank you. [*He mounts*] Ladies and gentlemen. [*Chorus of "Hear, hear"*] We must all admit that the methods of raising the wind for all sorts of worthless persons and useless charities stand in need of entire revision. Fancy fairs, amateur theatricals, tableaux vivants, and such grotesque futilities have had their day. In the interests of those long-suffering persons who get up charity entertainments, and those yet more long-suffering persons who attend them, it is high time to inaugurate a new departure. [*Cries of "Hear, hear"*] Ladies and gentlemen, there are three questions I take it which we ask ourselves when we raise a charitable subscription. Firstly, how shall we advertise ourselves, or amuse ourselves, as the case may be? Secondly, how far shall we be able to fleece our friends and the public? Thirdly, is the charity a deserving one? — The only really vital question of the three is "How shall we amuse ourselves in the sacred cause of charity?"

[*Cries of* "Hear, hear"]

LADY CRANDOVER. Lushington, stop this nonsense before it goes any further! Do you hear?

MONTY. Ladies and gentlemen, I am in your hands. Shall I go on?

[*Loud cries of* "Yes, yes — Go on, — Go on, Monty — Go on, Lushington"]

LADY CRANDOVER. [*To* LADY CLARICE] Now she'll disgrace herself.

SIR BRICE [*having overheard*]. What did you say, Lady Crandover?

LADY CRANDOVER. Nothing, Sir Brice.

SIR BRICE. I understood you to say that Miss Larondie would disgrace herself.

DULCIE [*with shame*]. Oh, Sir Brice, please let me go!

[DAVID REMON *enters.* DULCIE *going off comes face to face with him — stops*]

SIR BRICE. No, stay. Don't take any notice of what has been said.

DAVID. What has been said?

SIR BRICE. What business is it of yours? Miss Larondie is a connection of my family. Go on, Lushington — Go on. We'll have this auction — it's in the cause of charity, isn't it? Go on!

DAVID. [*To* MONTAGU] What auction? What charity?

MONTY [*soothingly*]. Gentlemen, gentlemen, we are taking this far too seriously. Pray be calm and allow me to proceed. [*Cries of* "Hear! — Go on, Monty!"] In an age when, as all good moralists lament, love is so often brought into the market, the marriage market — and other markets — and is sold to the highest bidder, it would, I am convinced, require a far more alarming outrage on propriety than that which we are now about to commit, to cause the now obsolete and unfashionable blush of shame to mount into the now obsolete and unfashionable cheek of modesty. Gentlemen, without further ado I offer for your competition — one kiss from Miss Larondie. [*Movement on the part of* DAVID. SIR BRICE *and he stand confronting each other*] One kiss from Miss Larondie. What shall I say, gentlemen?

FANCOURT. A sovereign.

MONTY. A sovereign is offered. I will on my own account advance ten shillings. Thirty shillings is offered, gentlemen.

SHARLAND. Thirty-five shillings.

MONTY. I cannot take an advance of less than ten shillings on this lot. Shall I say two pounds?

[SHARLAND *nods*]

SIR BRICE. A fiver.

[DAVID *steps forward towards* SIR BRICE]

MONTY. Thank you. A fiver. You are trifling, gentlemen.

FANCOURT. Six.

MONTY. Six guineas — guineas only. Six guineas is offered. Gentlemen, if you do not bid up, in justice to my client I must withdraw the lot.

SHARLAND. Seven.

SIR BRICE. Ten.

MONTY. Ten guineas. Gentlemen, only ten guineas — only ten guineas for this rare and genuine, this highly desirable —

DAVID. Twenty guineas.

MONTY. Twenty guineas. Thank you, sir. This gentleman sees the quality of the article I am submitting —

SIR BRICE. Thirty.

MONTY. Thirty guineas. Gentlemen, is the age of chivalry dead? Mr. Fancourt, you are credited with some small amount of prowess among helpless ladies —

SHARLAND. Cut in, Fan.

FANCOURT. Thirty-one.

MONTY. Cannot take advances of less than five guineas. Thirty-five guineas. Gentlemen, will you force me to expatiate further on this exquisite —

DAVID. Forty.

SIR BRICE. Fifty.

[DAVID *and* SIR BRICE *are getting nearer to each other*]

LORD CRANDOVER. Lushington, this is enough. This is getting beyond a joke.

MONTY. Then it's the only thing in life that ever did, so we'll continue. Bid up, gentlemen, bid up. I am assured, gentlemen, by my client, the vendor, that on no account will this lot ever be duplicated. I am therefore offering you a unique opportunity of purchasing what I will venture to describe as the most —

DAVID. Sixty.

SIR BRICE. Seventy.

LORD CRANDOVER. Enough—enough! Stop this jest.

MONTY. Jest? I presume you are in earnest, gentlemen, about the purchase of this lot?

DAVID. I am.

SIR BRICE. Go on, go on.

MONTY. Seventy guineas, seventy guineas. Gentlemen, you have not all done? Mr. Fancourt, faint heart —

SHARLAND. Have another shy, Fan.

FANCOURT. Seventy-five.

MONTY. Seventy-five. Going at seventy-five guineas — the only chance; going at seventy-five guineas.

FANCOURT. I say, Bricey, don't let me in.

SIR BRICE. Eighty.

[*Looking at* DAVID]

DAVID. Ninety.

SIR BRICE. A hundred.

[*Getting close to* DAVID]

DAVID. Two hundred.

SIR BRICE. Three hundred.

LORD CRANDOVER. Skene, come away, do you hear? Come away.

[*Trying to drag* SIR BRICE *away*]

SIR BRICE. Let me be. What's the last bidding, Lushington?

MONTY. Three hundred guineas.

SIR BRICE. Five.

DAVID. A thousand.

SIR BRICE. Fifteen hundred.

DAVID. Two thousand.

SIR BRICE. Three, and [*growling*] be damned to you! [*Pause*] Knock it down. Lushington.

[*Long pause.* DAVID *shows disappointment*]

MONTY. Three thousand guineas is offered, gentlemen. [*Pause*] No further bid? Going at three thousand. Going, going. [*Knocks it down*] Sir Brice, the lot is yours at three thousand guineas.

SIR BRICE. Brinkler, pens, ink, and paper and a stamp. [*Stepping towards barrel.* DAVID *comes to him*] You've no further business here.

DAVID. Yes, I think.

[*Pens, ink, and paper are brought to* SIR BRICE; *he hastily dashes off the cheque, gives it to* MONTAGU]

MONTY. Thank you. Miss Larondie, a cheque for three thousand guineas. You have secured an annuity for your *protégées*.

DULCIE [*refusing the cheque*]. No.

SIR BRICE. Miss Larondie. [DAVID *looks at him*] It will perhaps save any further misconstruction if I tell these ladies and gentlemen that an hour ago I asked you to do me the honour to become my wife. [*General surprise*]

DULCIE. Sir Brice —

SIR BRICE. Will you do me the favour to take that cheque for your charity, and the further favour of becoming Lady Skene?

[MONTAGU *offers the cheque. A pause.* DULCIE *looks round, looks at* LADY CLARICE, *takes the cheque*]

DULCIE. Thank you, Sir Brice. I shall be very proud.

[DAVID *shows quiet despair. Goes to back. Half the guests crowd round* SIR BRICE *and* DULCIE, *congratulating. The others show surprise, interest, and amazement*]

LADY CRANDOVER [*in a very loud voice*]. My carriage at once.

LORD CRANDOVER [*in a low voice to her*]. We'd better stay and make the best of it.

LADY CRANDOVER. No, my carriage. Come, Clarice.

[*Goes off. A good many of the guests follow her*]

[*Exeunt* LADY CLARICE *and* LORD CRANDOVER]

SIR BRICE. [*To* FANCOURT] The Crandovers have gone off in a huff. Bet you a tenner they'll dine with me before three months.

FANCOURT. Done!

SIR BRICE. [*To* DULCIE] If you will allow me, I will place you in my sister's care. She's in the ball-room.

DULCIE [*looking at her dress*]. No, Sir Brice, not yet. I've one of my old evening dresses upstairs. May I put it on?

SIR BRICE. Yes, if you like. I'll wait for you at the ball-room door.

DULCIE. I won't be a moment.

[*Running off upstairs with great excitement and delight*]

MONTY. [*To* SIR BRICE] Congratulate you heartily, Sir Brice. [*Offering hand*]

SIR BRICE [*taking it*]. Oh, I suppose it's all right.

SHARLAND. [*To* SIR BRICE] Your wooing was charmingly fresh and original, Sir Brice.

SIR BRICE. Think so?

CHARLEY. [*To* MONTY] What on earth does he want to marry the girl for?

MONTY. Somebody has bet him a guinea he wouldn't.

[*Exeunt* CHARLEY *and* MONTAGU *into the ball-room*]

FANCOURT. Bravo, Bricey, my boy! This'll make up to you for losing the Leger.

SIR BRICE. Think so? I'll go and get a smoke outside. [*Exit at gates*]

SHARLAND. [*To* FANCOURT] Just like Bricey to do a silly fool's trick like this.

FANCOURT. I pity the girl. Bricey will make a sweet thing in husbands.

SHARLAND. By Jove, yes. Her life'll be a regular beno, and no mistake.

[*Exeunt.* DAVID *is left alone sitting at back*]

[*Enter* EDDIE. DAVID *drinks and laughs rather bitterly to himself*]

EDDIE. What's gone wrong, Davy?

DAVID. Miss Larondie is going to marry Sir Brice Skene.

EDDIE. Oh, then the solar system is all out of joint! Poor old big brother!

DAVID. I won't feel it, Eddie, I won't feel it.

Eddie. Yes, you will, Davy. Yes, you will. Why weren't you tumbled into Mars, or Jupiter, or Saturn, or into any world but this?

David. Why?

Eddie. This is the very worst world that ever spun round, for a man who has a heart. Look at all the heartless and stupid people; what a paradise this is for them!

David. I'll forget her and plunge into my work. There are millions of new worlds to discover.

Eddie. Yes, but are they all like this? because if they are, what's the use of discovering millions more of them? Oh, Davy, isn't there one perfect world out of all the millions — just one — where everything goes right, and fiddles never play out of tune?

David. There isn't one, Eddie, not one of all the millions. They're all alike.

Eddie. And breaking hearts in all of them? Oh, let's pretend there's just one perfect star somewhere, shall we?

David. Oh, very well; let's pretend there's one in the nebula of Andromeda. It's a long way off, and it does no harm to pretend. Besides, it makes the imbroglio of the universe complete if there is one perfect world somewhere in it.

[Sir Brice *enters smoking, throws away his cigarette, looks at* David *rather insolently, goes into the ball-room*]

David. If he doesn't treat her well — what does it matter? It's all a farce, but if he doesn't treat her well, I feel, Eddie, I could put a murder into the farce, just for fun.

Eddie. Come home, Davy.

David. Let me be, my boy. It's only a pinprick. I shall get over it.

Eddie. I wish I could bear it for you, Davy.

David. That would only mean your heart breaking instead of mine.

Eddie. Don't you think I'd break my heart for you, Davy?

Dulcie [*her voice heard off*]. Thanks! I can't wait! Sir Brice is waiting for me!

Eddie. Poor old big brother!

[*Exit*]

[*Enter* Dulcie *down the stairs in evening dress, excited, radiant*]

Dulcie [*seeing* David]. I thought you'd gone. Did you hear? I'm to be Lady Skene. Do I look nice? [*Very excited*] I beg your pardon — I don't know what I'm saying. [*Looks round*] I wish there was a looking-glass here. I wonder where Sir Brice is — I'm to be Lady Skene — won't you congratulate me?

David. I hope you will be happy.

Dulcie. No, congratulate me.

David. I hope you will be happy.

Dulcie. Ah, you think I sha'n't be happy? Then I will, just to spite you!

David. Ah, do spite me and be happy.

Dulcie [*fidgeting with her dress*]. I'm sure my dress isn't right. Wasn't that a jest about the kiss?

David. A great jest.

Dulcie. You wouldn't have really given two thousand guineas for a kiss from me?

David [*nods*] Why not? Sir Brice gave fifty thousand for the pleasure of losing the Leger.

Dulcie. But he stood to win.

David. So did I.

Dulcie. What?

David. The kiss.

Dulcie. But you wouldn't really have given two thousand guineas for it?

David [*nods*]. I think highly of women. It's a pleasing delusion of mine. Don't disturb it.

Dulcie [*looking at him, after a little pause*]. You are the strangest creature, but what a splendid friend you'd make! I'm keeping Sir Brice waiting. [*Turns round, sees that the lace on the skirt of her dress is hanging loose*] Look at that lace! What can I do? [*Giving him a pin*] Would you mind pinning that lace on my skirt?

David [*takes the pin, kneels, and pins the lace, unseen by* Dulcie, *kisses the skirt*] Will that do?

Dulcie. Thank you so much. Do I look nice?

[*He looks up at her imploringly, like a dumb creature; she glances swiftly round to see that they are alone, suddenly bends and kisses him; runs up the ball-room steps. A burst of dance-music*]

[*Three years and a half pass between Acts I and II*]

ACT II

Scene. — *Reception-room at* Lady Skene's. *A great crowd in farther room. Discover* Lady Crandover, Lady Clarice, Charley Wishanger [*now* Lady Shalford], Montagu, Fancourt, Sharland, *and the young men of the first Act. Among the guests in farther room* Sir Winchmore Wills *and the* Hon. Percy Blanchflower.

Lady Crandover. It's astounding.

Charley. What is?

Lady Crandover. The way every one runs after this woman. She's got everybody here again to-night.

Lady Clarice. Professor Rawkinson and the Bishop of Malmesbury were fighting to get her an ice.

Charley. What is the secret of her popularity?

Monty. Why did you come here to-night?

Charley. I? Oh, I came because everybody else comes. Why did you?

Monty. Because everybody else comes. Do we ever have any other reason for going anywhere, admiring anything, saying anything, or doing anything? The secret of getting a crowd to your room is, "*Entice a bell-wether.*" The flock will follow.

Charley. Who was bell-wether to Lady Skene?

Monty. The old Duchess of Norwich.

Lady Crandover. I suppose the Duchess knows all about Lady Skene's antecedents?

Monty. What does it matter about anybody's antecedents to-day?

Lady Crandover. We must draw the line somewhere.

Monty. On the contrary, my dear Lady Crandover, we must *not* draw the line *anywhere*. We have yet got to learn what democracy means.

Lady Clarice. What does democracy mean?

Monty. That there is no line to be drawn, either socially, morally, pecuniarily, politically, religiously, or anywhere.

Lady Clarice. How horrid!

Monty [*continuing*]. Who are the interesting people here to-night? Of course there's a crowd of respectable nonentities — But who are the attractions? Attraction number one: a financier's wife — the most charming woman in the world — gives the very best dinners in London — had an extensive acquaintance amongst the officers at Aldershot fifteen years ago.

[The Hon. Percy Blanchflower, *a fussy, buzzy, mincing, satirical little creature, with a finicking, feminine manner and gestures, has overheard, comes up to the group*]

Blanchflower. What's this? — eh? — hum? No scandal, I trust?

Monty. No, Blanchflower; no scandal — only the plain, unvarnished truth about all our friends.

Blanchflower. Ah, then I'll stay and listen. Go on!

Monty. Attraction number two: leading temperance and social purity orator — can move an audience of ten thousand to tears — leads the loosest of lives — and is suspected of having poisoned his wife.

Blanchflower. But she had a fearful cockney accent. And he's very kind to his aged aunt and pretty niece — eh? — hum? Give him his due.

Monty. My dear Blanchflower, I'm not blaming the man for poisoning his wife. It may have been a necessity of his position; and if she had a cockney accent, it was a noble thing to do. Attraction number three: pretty little lady who has just emerged triumphantly from the Divorce Court, without a spot upon her pretty little character. Attraction number four —

[Lady Clarice *rejoins the group*]

Blanchflower [*interrupting*]. No! No! Skip number four! We know all about her. Attraction number five. And mind, I shall thoroughly scold you all — when Lushington has got through his list.

Monty [*proceeding*]. Attraction number five: impressionist artist, novelist, and general dirty modern dabbler — is consummately clever — a consistent scoundrel in every relation of life — especially to women — a liar, a cheat, and drunkard — and a great personal friend of my own.

Blanchflower. Oh, this is too shocking! This is really too shocking!

Lady Clarice. You've omitted the chief attraction to-night — our famous astronomer.

Monty. Remon?

Blanchflower. Of course. Since

his great discovery we've only one astronomer in England.

CHARLEY. What was his great discovery?

BLANCHFLOWER. Don't know. Some new spots on Venus, I believe.

MONTY. No. That she wanted a new belt to hide the manners of her inhabitants, which were distinctly visible through his new large telescope, and if constantly observed would tend to the corruption of London society.

BLANCHFLOWER. You naughty person! You're not to look through that telescope!

MONTY. My dear Blanchflower, I have; and I assure you we have nothing to fear. But I tremble for the morals of Venus if they get a telescope as large as Remon's and begin to look at us.

BLANCHFLOWER. Tell me, this friendship of the astronomer with Lady Skene — eh? hum? — quite innocent — eh?

MONTY. I have never known any friendship between a man and a married woman that was not innocent. How can it be guilty, unless the woman is ugly?

LADY CLARICE. Poor dear Lady Skene is fearfully ill-used, I hear. [SIR WINCHMORE WILLS, *a fashionable middle-aged physician, has come up and joined the group*] I've heard that Sir Brice gets drunk and — then — dreadful things happen.

BLANCHFLOWER. But that can't be true — eh? hum? — Sir Winchmore — eh?

SIR WINCHMORE. I have never treated Sir Brice for alcoholism, nor Lady Skene for bruises.

BLANCHFLOWER. No, of course, no — but you've heard — hum? eh?

SIR WINCHMORE. Singularly enough, I have never heard or seen anything in the least discreditable to any one of my patients.

[EDDIE *enters and talks to guests*]

CHARLEY. I know for a fact Sir Brice came a terrific cropper last week at Epsom, and doesn't know how he stands.

[EDDIE *is listening attentively*]

BLANCHFLOWER. And — hum — the astronomer — hum? eh? hum? — is there any truth — eh?

MONTY. Well, we *know* that our astronomer succeeded a few months ago to an immense fortune left him by a mountaineering friend in Canada. We *know* that Sir Brice neglects his wife and is practically ruined. We *know* that Lady Skene continues her parties, her household, her carriages, and we *know* that our astronomer pays [*Pause*] the greatest attentions to Lady Skene. Of course this doesn't absolutely prove Lady Skene's guilt — yet why should we deprive ourselves of the pleasure of believing and circulating a spicy story about our friends merely because there is only the very slightest foundation for it?

[EDDIE *rises rather indignantly and comes a little nearer to the group without being noticed by them*]

BLANCHFLOWER. Oh, this is very naughty of us. We are actually talking scandal about our hostess. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves!

LADY CRANDOVER. Really, it's time somebody made a stand, or society will be ruined. Here is a woman who was actually a barmaid at a public-house — her name is in everybody's mouth in connection with this astronomer, and yet —

MONTY. And yet we crush to her receptions. At least you do, Lady Crandover.

LADY CRANDOVER. Oh, we are all to blame for lowering the moral tone of society as we are doing.

BLANCHFLOWER. Oh, my dear Lady Crandover, please, please, please, do not make things unpleasant by dragging in morality. But where is the astronomer? — eh? hum?

EDDIE. My brother will be coming by and by. I'll tell him he's wanted here.

[*Exit.* BLANCHFLOWER *looks aghast and stares round at all the rest, who show some slight discomfiture.* FANCOURT *and* SHARLAND *join the group*]

BLANCHFLOWER. Dear me! That's the astronomer's brother. Have we said anything? — hum? eh?

MONTY. My dear Blanchflower. what does it matter what lies we tell about each other when none of our friends think any the worse of us if they are true!

BLANCHFLOWER. Oh, but it's very wrong to tell lies, very wrong indeed. I've not seen Sir Brice to-night. Where is he? eh?

FANCOURT. Bricey doesn't generally stay very long at his wife's receptions.

SHARLAND. Bricey's latest little

hobby is teaching the girls at the Folly Theatre to box.

FANCOURT. Yes. Last Tuesday he was in great force at the Ducks and Drakes Club egging on Betty Vignette to fight Sylvia Vernon.

SHARLAND. Oh, that's coming off — two hundred a side, on Sunday night week.

FANCOURT [*cautiously winking at* SHARLAND, *in a warning way*]. I say, old chap, keep it quiet. I wonder where Bricey is to-night.

MONTY. What does it matter whether he is playing baccarat with the pot-boy at the corner, or clandestinely taking his nurse-girl to the Alhambra on the pretence that it is a missionary meeting? We may be quite sure that Bricey is doing something equally vicious, stupid, disreputable, and — original.

CHARLEY. [*To* MONTY] Come here, you monster. Have you heard the news?

[*During the conversation of* CHARLEY *and* MONTY *the other group put their heads together and whisper*]

MONTY. What?

CHARLEY. Sir Joseph is going to leave the Marchmoore estates to Clarice.

MONTY [*glancing at* LADY CLARICE]. Sure?

CHARLEY. Fact. The will is to be signed in a few days. Clarice told me so in confidence.

MONTY. Thanks.

[*Strolls cautiously up to* LADY CLARICE, *hovers about her till he gets a chance of speaking to her. A general laugh from the group*]

BLANCHFLOWER [*who has been in centre of group*]. Oh, this is very shocking! We are actually talking scandal about our host. And he has his good points. He hasn't strangled his baby, has he, Sir Winchmore?

SIR WINCHMORE. Sir Brice has the greatest consideration for the welfare of his offspring. [DULCIE *comes from other room magnificently dressed, restless, pale, nervous, excited*] He never goes near it.

[*An awkward little pause as they see* DULCIE. LADY CLARICE *goes up to her*]

LADY CLARICE. What a lot of interesting folks you always have, dear. Who is that lady in pale blue?

DULCIE. Mrs. Chalmers.

LADY CLARICE. The lady who has figured so much in the newspapers lately? What a singular gift you have of attracting all sorts of people, dear.

DULCIE. Have I? That's sometimes a misfortune.

LADY CLARICE. Yes, it does involve one in undesirable acquaintances and relationships.

DULCIE. Still it must be rather annoying to be without it.

[*Goes restlessly to* SIR WINCHMORE. LADY CLARICE *shows slight mortification.* MONTY, *who has been watching the scene, goes up to her*]

MONTY. Lady Clarice, let me give you some supper.

DULCIE [*taking* SIR WINCHMORE *a little aside*]. Sir Winchmore — so kind of you to come. [*In a half whisper*] That sleeping draught's no use — you must send me a stronger one.

SIR WINCHMORE [*shakes his head*]. Lady Skene —

DULCIE [*impetuously*]. Yes, yes, please — I must have it — I've not slept for three nights.

SIR WINCHMORE. Lady Skene, let me beg you —

DULCIE. No, no, no, — you must patch me up and keep me going somehow till the end of the season, then you shall do what you like with me.

SIR WINCHMORE. But, Lady Skene —

DULCIE [*intense suppressed nervousness*]. But — [*Imploringly*] Oh, don't contradict me. — When any one speaks to me I feel I must shriek out "Yah, yah, yah!" [BLANCHFLOWER *has overheard the last speech.* DULCIE *sees that* BLANCHFLOWER *is looking at her, controls herself after an immense effort, puts on society smile. To* BLANCHFLOWER] The Bishop was talking to me just now about his mission to convert the West End of London, and I could scarcely keep from shrieking out to him "Yah, yah, yah!" Isn't it strange?

BLANCHFLOWER. Not at all. Clergymen always produce that effect upon me.

DULCIE [*turning to* SIR WINCHMORE]. Sir Winchmore, you'll run up to the nursery and see Rosy before you go, won't you?

SIR WINCHMORE. What's the matter?

DULCIE. Nothing, only a little tumble and a bruise. My sister Nell is with her, but you'll just see her?

SIR WINCHMORE. Certainly.

DULCIE. I'm so foolish about her. [*Imploringly*] She is strong and healthy, isn't she?

SIR WINCHMORE. A magnificent child.

[SIR BRICE *has entered through other room. He looks coarser and more dissipated than in first Act, and is more brutalised. There is a slight movement of all the guests away from him.* SHARLAND *enters*]

DULCIE [*not seeing* SIR BRICE. *To* SIR WINCHMORE]. Really? Really?

SIR WINCHMORE. Really. Sir Brice and you may well be proud of her.

[SIR BRICE'S *entrance has caused an awkward pause amongst the guests*]

SIR WINCHMORE. We were talking of your youthful daughter, Sir Brice.

SIR BRICE. I hate brats.

[*Another awkward pause*]

DULCIE [*to cover it, rattles away with forced gaiety*]. We shall see you at Ascot, of course, Mr. Blanchflower. — Sir Winchmore, what are these frightful new waters that you are sending all your patients to? — That reminds me, Lady Shalford, how is Sir Digby's gout?

[*Slight continued movement of the guests away from* SIR BRICE]

CHARLEY. Terrible. I pack him off to Aix on Thursday.

DULCIE [*same tone*]. So sorry he couldn't come to-night.

CHARLEY. My dear, I'm very glad, and so I'm sure is everybody who knows him. If Aix doesn't cure him, I shall try something drastic.

SIR BRICE. Serve him as I did my trainer Burstow.

DULCIE [*noticing the guests' repulsion, slightly frowns at* SIR BRICE *unobserved by the guests, and goes on speaking to change the subject*]. We shall go to Homburg again —

SIR BRICE [*speaks her down. To* CHARLEY]. Burstow had the gout. I treated him myself. [*Coarse little chuckle*] I gave him a bottle of port, champagne at intervals, and brown brandy *ad lib.* A tombstone now marks Burstow's precise position, which is longitudinal. I wrote his epitaph, but the vicar wouldn't pass it. So the vicar and I have a law-suit on.

[*Another coarse little chuckle. Another awkward little pause*]

DULCIE [*to cover it, continues*]. Mr. Fancourt, did you make inquiries about the house-boat for us?

SIR BRICE. We sha'n't go to Henley.

DULCIE. [*To* FANCOURT] Then of course you needn't make inquiries.

FANCOURT. But I've arranged it. My brother will be awfully delighted if you'll accept the loan of his for the Henley week. You and Sir Brice will be awfully pleased with it.

SIR BRICE [*more decidedly*]. We shall not go to Henley.

DULCIE [*another covered frown at* SIR BRICE, *again controlling herself with immense effort and speaking very calmly*]. Will you thank your brother and say we shall not be going.

[*Awkward pause.* SIR BRICE *puts his hands in his pockets and yawns.* DULCIE *engages the group in conversation, and they crowd round her*]

SIR BRICE. Percy, come and have a little game of poker in the smoking-room.

SHARLAND. Very sorry, Bricey, haven't so much as a fiver with me.

SIR BRICE. You can borrow. Can't you borrow, eh?

SHARLAND. Very sorry, dear old chap; never borrow or lend.

[*Exit.* SIR BRICE *stands and yawns, looks sulky and vicious, then calls out*]

SIR BRICE. Fancourt. [FANCOURT *glances but does not come*] Fan — Fan, I say — [*At length* FANCOURT *comes*] We're getting up a little hand at poker just to wind up this infernally dull evening.

FANCOURT [*shakes his head and laughs*]. Not good enough, Bricey — not good enough.

[REMON *enters. At his entrance guests show marked interest, and the conversation stops.* SIR BRICE *watches with a sulky expression.* DULCIE *shows great pleasure, goes to meet* REMON]

DULCIE. I'm so glad you've come. You have so many engagements.

[*Shakes hands*]

DAVID. None more pleasing than this.

Blanchflower. I insist on knowing Mr. Remon — somebody introduce me — introduce me.

Dulcie. Mr. Remon — Mr. Percy Blanchflower.

Blanchflower. I'm so delighted to know you. We want to look at Venus through that large telescope of yours.

David. It's in the South of France.

Blanchflower. I go there every winter. We were talking about your wonderful discoveries — hum? eh? We want to know all about them.

David. Oh, spare me, or rather, yourselves. [Sir Brice *laughs*]

Fancourt. You seem to have got something good all to yourself, Bricey.

Sir Brice. Yes, I have. [*Laughs*]

Blanchflower. [*Aside, to* Sir Winchmore] What is Remon's discovery? eh?

Sir Winchmore. Haven't the least idea — something about Saturn, I fancy.

Blanchflower [*buzzes up to* Remon]. Your last discovery now — about Saturn, wasn't it — hum? eh?

[*All through* David's *conversation with the guests, he adopts the same light, frivolous tone throughout, and speaks without the least suggestion of seriousness. This gives a contrast to the scenes with* Dulcie]

David [*amused, very light and chaffing tone*]. About Saturn? Oh yes. My conjecture is that bad folks when they die are sent to Saturn to study current theology, and if at the end of five hundred years they know anything about it, their probation is complete.

[*General laugh.* David *turns to group.* Sir Brice *laughs*]

Fancourt. What is it, Bricey?

Sir Brice. Lady Skene is making a howling fuss with all of you to-night. She'll make a howling fuss of another kind next week. I can't stand that astronomer fellow.

Blanchflower. But do tell us, Lady Skene, what is Mr. Remon's great specialty — hum? eh?

Dulcie. I believe Mr. Remon has devoted a great deal of time to the study of sun-spots.

Blanchflower. Oh — ah, yes — hum. Now [*to* David] what is the special function of sun-spots — hum? eh? What do they do?

David [*still amused, chaffing, mysterious*]. I've long had a suspicion that there is a very subtle connection between sun-spots and politics — in fact, I am convinced that the present decadence of political manners and morals is entirely caused by the persistence of a certain sun-spot. As soon as we can remove it, the natural ingrained honesty and patriotism of our politicians will reassert themselves.

[*General laugh*]

Sir Brice [*pushes a little forward with a rather insolent manner to* David]. My character is always puzzling me. Can you tell me whether its present development is due to sun-spots?

David [*is about to reply rather angrily, is checked by a look from* Dulcie, *speaks very politely*]. You might not think me polite, Sir Brice.

Sir Brice [*persisting*]. I should like to have a scientific examination made of my character.

David [*still controlling himself*]. I fear I should not make a sympathetic operator.

Sir Brice [*still persisting*]. But —

Dulcie [*who has been watching very apprehensively, to* Sir Brice]. My dear, Lady Franklin wants to ask you something about a horse for Ascot. She was here a moment ago. [*Looking around, drawing* Sir Brice *away from the group, who close up round* Remon. Dulcie *is getting* Sir Brice *away*] For God's sake keep away from us! [*A guest is just passing,* Dulcie *turns to her with a forced society smile and manner*] How do you do? What a sweet frock!

[*Shakes hands with guest, who passes on*]

Sir Brice [*sulkily*]. What's the matter? [*Approaching her*]

Dulcie. Don't go near any one. You smell of brandy.

[*All this under breath with great terror and apprehension*]

Sir Brice [*getting a little nearer her*]. I rather like the smell of brandy.

Dulcie [*terrified, under breath*]. Keep away — keep away — if you come a step nearer to me I shall shriek out before everybody. You nearly drove me out of my mind this morning. Oh, for Heaven's sake — do go — do go!

Sir Brice. Well, as it's infernally slow here I will go — but — you may as well know, there will be no Ascot, no Henley, no Goodwood, no Homburg, no anything. We shall be sold up within a month. [Dulcie *is staggering*

for a moment]. Ta ta! — my blessing — I'm going to the Club.

[*Exit.* DULCIE *stands overwhelmed for a moment, tries to pull herself together, staggers a little.* DAVID, *who has been watching her and* SIR BRICE, *leaves the group and comes to her, speaks with great feeling, very softly, his tone and manner to her in great contrast to his tone and manner with the guests*]

DAVID. Lady Skene, you are in trouble — you are ill.

DULCIE [*again with the forced society smile*]. No, only the fatigue of the season, and the rooms are so crowded, aren't they?

[*A group of guests begin little gestures and significant glances and whispers, watching* DAVID *and* DULCIE]

[EDDIE *re-enters, and unnoticed looks from one group to the other*]

DAVID. I'll tell Sir Winchmore.

DULCIE. No, don't take any notice. If I can only get through this evening! [*With a sudden instinct, appealing to him with great entreaty*] Tell me something that will carry me through this next hour till they have all gone. Give me that sort of medicine!

DAVID [*with the utmost tenderness and feeling, in a low voice, bending over her. The glances and whispers continued*] Your trouble isn't real. This society world of yours isn't a real world. There's one little star in Andromeda where everything is real. You've wandered down here amongst these shadows when you should have stayed at home.

DULCIE [*pleased, lending herself to his suggestions*]. Aren't these real men and women?

DAVID. No. They are only masquerading. Good God, I think we are all masquerading! Look at them! If you touched them with reality they would vanish. And so with your trouble of to-night. Fly back to Andromeda, and you will see what a dream all this is.

DULCIE. How strange! I was half dead a moment ago, and you've made me so well and happy. But you — do you belong to Andromeda, — or to this world?

[EDDIE *has been watching and comes down nearer to them*]

DAVID. To both. But the little star in Andromeda is my home. I'm only wandering with you amongst these phantoms.

[*They have become for the moment quite absorbed.* EDDIE, *who has been watching the whispers and smiles, comes up to them, speaks rather sharply*]

EDDIE. Lady Skene — that lamp-shade — [*Pointing off*] Won't it catch fire? [*Taking* DAVID'S *arm, dragging him away*] I want to talk to you, Davy.

[DULCIE *turns to manservant, points to the lamp-shade, and gives him directions concerning it*]

DAVID [*turns savagely on* EDDIE, *growls*]. Why the devil did you come between us?

EDDIE. Don't you care for her, Davy?

DAVID. Care for her?

[DULCIE, *having given manservant instructions, goes to guests*]

EDDIE. Do you know what these folks are saying? That Sir Brice is ruined, and that you have lately come into a fortune.

DAVID. Well?

EDDIE. And that she continues her parties, her dresses, her house, because you —

[*Stops, looks at* DAVID]

DAVID [*looks around at guests savagely. Stands for a moment or two reflecting, his face then assumes a look of great resolve*]

EDDIE [*watching him*]. I was right to tell you, Davy?

DAVID [*shakes* EDDIE'S *hand in reply. Another little pause*]. Go and tell her, Eddie, that I must see her for a few minutes by and by — to-night — when everybody is gone.

EDDIE. What are you going to do, Davy?

DAVID. We'll get away south to-morrow, old boy. The observatory's nearly finished, and — there's no tittle-tattle between the snows and the stars. Go and tell her I must see her, and bring me back her answer.

EDDIE. [*To* DULCIE] You've not been down to supper, Lady Skene.

DULCIE. I really don't want any.

EDDIE. But I've a message for you.

DULCIE. A message?

EDDIE. From Andromeda.

[*Exeunt* DULCIE *and* EDDIE]

LADY CLARICE. You are really too dreadful.

BLANCHFLOWER [*buzzing round* REMON]. That's a charming theory of yours about the effect of sun-spots on morality.

DAVID. Yes. It isn't true, but it's very consoling. That's why I invented it.

MONTY. If it's charming and consoling, why should it be true?

DAVID. Why should it? and put everything else out of focus.

BLANCHFLOWER. Out of focus! Ah! I'm afraid you're a dreadful, dreadful pessimist.

DAVID. No; but I'm as willing to play that part as any other, since it's only in jest.

CHARLEY. In jest? What do you mean?

DAVID. I have to spend so much time alone amongst the stars, that when I come back into the world I am quite at a loss. I find myself amongst crowds of shadows — very charming shadows they are — playing at money-making, playing at religion, playing at love, at art, at politics, at all sorts of odd games, and so for the time, I join in the game, and pretend to take an interest in it; and a very pleasant game it is, so long as we don't mistake it for reality.

CHARLEY. But surely we are realities!

DAVID. With the profoundest respect in the world, Lady Shalford, I cannot bring myself to believe that you are. Still, I won't spoil your game by staying out.

BLANCHFLOWER [*with a little affected, mincing earnestness*]. Oh, but surely, surely there is Something real Somewhere. Oh, yes — surely, surely — we must believe that there is — hum? eh? — a Kind of — eh? — a Sort of a Something — Somewhere, eh?

DAVID. If you like to believe there is a kind of a sort of a something — somewhere — and you find it consoling, I'm as willing to pretend to believe that as anything else.

BLANCHFLOWER [*still with the same affected earnestness*]. Oh, but surely, when you look into your own heart — hum? eh? —

DAVID. I always wear a mask over my heart. I never dare look into it.

MONTY. I find this world a remarkably comfortable and well-arranged place. I always do exactly as I like. If I want anything I buy it, whether I pay for it or no. If I see a woman I admire I make love to her, whether she belongs to another man or no. If a lie will answer my purpose, I tell it. I can't remember I ever denied myself one single pleasure in life; nor have I ever put myself out to oblige a fellow-creature. I am consistently selfish and I find it pays; I credit everybody else with the same consistent selfishness, and I am never deceived in my estimate of character. These are my principles, and I always act up to them. And I assure you I find this world the pleasantest possible place.

DAVID. A fairy palace! An enchanted spot! Only take care! While you are dancing, there may be a volcano underneath.

MONTY. If there is, surely dancing is the pleasantest preparation for the general burst-up.

EDDIE. Davy —

DAVID [*goes to him*]. Well?

EDDIE. She'll see you to-night. Come back here when they've all gone.

BLANCHFLOWER. [*To* MONTY] How charmingly frank you are, Monty.

MONTY. Why not? We have one supreme merit in this generation — we have ceased to render to virtue the homage of hypocrisy.

DAVID. And our moral evolution is now complete. Good-night!

[*Exeunt* DAVID *and* EDDIE]

MONTY [*coming down with* LADY CLARICE]. Of course I know there is something wretchedly philistine and provincial about marriage, but I will take care this aspect of it is never presented to you.

LADY CLARICE. I wonder what makes marriage so unlovely and so uninteresting?

MONTY. The exaggerated notion that prevails of its duties and responsibilities. Once do away with that, and it becomes an ideal state. Lady Clarice, you'd find me the most agreeable partner in the world.

LADY CLARICE. You'd be like most other husbands, I suppose.

MONTY. No; I should be unique. Husbands, as a rule, are foolish, jealous brutes, who insist that men shall have all the rights and women all the duties, — men shall have all the sweets and women all the sours of the marriage state. We would start on an entirely new plan. The sours we would nat-

urally equally avoid, and the sweets, — if there are any, — we would naturally do our best to secure.

LADY CLARICE. Separately, or together?

MONTY. According to our tastes. If you do me the honour to accept me, I pledge you my word I will never have the offensively bad taste to speak of a husband's rights. There shall be no "lord and master" nonsense.

LADY CLARICE. It sounds very well in theory. I wonder how it would work.

MONTY. Let us try. If we succeed we shall solve the vexed question of the age, and make ourselves happy in showing mankind the road to happiness.

LADY CLARICE. But if we fail?

MONTY. We shall have sacrificed ourselves for the benefit of our species. But we can't fail, the plan is perfect.

LADY CLARICE. If I spoke of rights and duties — if I were jealous —

MONTY. Ah! then you would be departing from the plan. Its charm is that it is a patent, self-adjusting, self-repairing, safety-valve plan, with double escapement action suited to all climates and dispositions. No rights, no duties, no self-assertion, no quarrels, no jealousy.

LADY CLARICE. And no love?

MONTY. Love is a perverted animal instinct, which is really a great bar to solid happiness in marriage. Believe me, you will like me and respect me in the end for not pretending to any such outworn impulses. You see I am frank.

LADY CLARICE. You are indeed. [*Looking at him very closely, watching him*] You know — [*Pause*] — my father cannot make any great settlements, and — [*Watching him closely*] I have no expectations.

MONTY [*stands it without flinching*]. So I am aware. I'm frightfully in debt, and I have no expectations. But there is a house in Grosvenor Place — it would suit us exactly.

LADY CLARICE [*watching him*]. But — without money?

MONTY. I cannot afford to be economical. I have acted on that principle throughout life, and I have always had the very best of everything. I do not see we need change it.

LADY CLARICE. You are perfectly atrocious — I don't care for you in the least.

MONTY [*with great politeness*]. My plan is precisely adapted to such cases.

LADY CRANDOVER. Come, Clarice — everybody is going. [*Exit*]

MONTY. I shall call on Lord Crandover to-morrow. You don't speak. Does silence give consent?

LADY CLARICE. I can't help your calling.

[*Exit.* MONTY *stands in slight deliberation.* CHARLEY *comes out from the conservatory behind him. She has been watching the last part of the scene from the conservatory*]

CHARLEY. Well?

MONTY. Landed, I think. You're sure about Sir Joseph and the estate?

CHARLEY. Quite. But it's not to be known yet. I'm a pet, ain't I?

MONTY. You are. [*Kisses her hand*]

CHARLEY. I must be going. That creature at home will be raising furies.

MONTY. When do you pack him to Aix?

CHARLEY. Thursday, praise the Lord!

MONTY. When shall I call?

CHARLEY. Friday?

MONTY. What time?

CHARLEY. Come to lunch?

MONTY. Yes.

CHARLEY. Friday at two. [*Exchange looks full of meaning*] Bye-bye.

MONTY. Bye-bye.

CHARLEY. Oh dear, am I the last? Good-bye, dear [*Kisses* DULCIE]. Monty, come and see me to my carriage.

MONTY. Good-bye, Lady Skene.

DULCIE. Good-bye.

[*Exit* MONTY *and* CHARLEY]

DULCIE. [*To* SERVANT] Thomson, I expect Mr. Remon. Show him in here.

SERVANT. Yes, my lady.

[*Exit.* HELEN *appears at door, still in nurse's costume*]

HELEN [*peeps in*]. They have all gone, dear.

DULCIE. I've got such a fever, Nell. Put your nice cold hand on my forehead. That's right. Hold it tight — tight. Why didn't you dress and come into my party?

HELEN. I was so tried and bored at the last, and I wanted to be with Rosy.

DULCIE. She's all right?

HELEN. Yes. She was awake a moment ago.

DULCIE [*suddenly*]. Fetch her! I must see her! Oh, you're right, Nell; it's been a hateful evening, with only

one bright spot in it — when he came and whispered something so sweet.

HELEN [*suddenly*]. Dulcie, you're sure of yourself?

DULCIE. I'm sure of him.

HELEN. He has never spoken — of — of —

DULCIE. Of love? Never. What does that matter? I know he loves me.

HELEN. Dulcie, you shouldn't say that — even to yourself.

DULCIE. Oh, that's all nonsense, Nell; as if there was ever a woman in this world that didn't know when she was loved!

HELEN. Dulcie!

DULCIE [*provokingly*]. He loves me! He loves me! He loves me, and I'm not ashamed of it, and I don't care who knows it. [*Throwing her arms round* HELEN'S *neck*] Nell, I'm so happy.

HELEN. Why?

DULCIE. He's coming, he's coming. Brice says we are utterly ruined. We're ruined, but I won't feel it to-night. I'll feel it to-morrow. I'll be happy for one minute to-night. He is coming.

HELEN. Mr. Remon?

DULCIE. Yes. Don't look shocked, Nell. Listen; this is true. Mr. Remon and I have never said one word to each other that all the world might not have heard. [*Pause*] I'm glad all the world hasn't heard it, though.

[THOMSON *comes in, announces* MR. REMON]

DULCIE. [*To* HELEN] Go and fetch Rosy. Yes! Yes!

[*Exit* HELEN. DAVID *has entered;* SERVANT *has gone off*]

[*To* DAVID] I'm so glad you've come. I want you to see Rosy. She's awake. You've never seen her.

[*All this very excited*]

DAVID. I shall be very pleased.

[*Looking at her*]

DULCIE. You're thinking about me.

DAVID. I was thinking that a mother is the most beautiful thing on earth.

DULCIE. Oh, you don't know! You can't imagine! She's over two years old, and I haven't got over remembering that she's mine. Every time I think of her I feel a little catch here in the very middle of my heart, a delicious little stab, as if some angel came behind me and whispered to me, "God has made you a present of ten hundred thousand million pounds all your own." Oh, she makes up to me for everything.

[DAVID *is approaching her with great tenderness when* HELEN *enters with* ROSY, *the two-year-old baby, in her arms in nightclothes*]

DULCIE [*rushes to* HELEN]. There! There! You may look at her!

HELEN. Hush! She's asleep!

DULCIE. I must kiss her if it kills her! [*Hugging the baby, kisses her, lifts the nightgown, kisses the baby's feet, croons over it — points her finger mockingly at* REMON *in childlike mockery and laughter*] There! There! There, Mr. Philosopher from Andromeda! You can't say a mother's love isn't real!

DAVID. I never did. It's the one thing that shows what a sham the rest of the world is. That little star in Andromeda is crowded with mothers. They've all been there once in their lives.

[*Bends over the baby for a moment*]

DULCIE [*excited, feverish*]. Nell, Mr. Remon has an odd notion that this world isn't real.

HELEN. The cure for that is to earn half-a-crown a day and live on it.

DAVID. Oh yes, I know. Work is real. [*Bends over the baby*]

DULCIE. [*To* DAVID] What are you looking at? [*Scrutinizes him carefully; then suddenly, with savage earnestness, half despair, half entreaty*] She's like *me?* She's like *me!!* [*crescendo, tigerish, frenzied*] Say she's like *me!!!*

DAVID [*very quietly*]. She is like *you.* [*Kisses the child reverently*] She is wholly like *you!*

DULCIE [*stands absorbed, very quietly*]. Take her back again to the nursery, Nell.

HELEN. Good-night, Mr. Remon.

DAVID. Good-night.

[*Goes towards the door with her*]

HELEN. [*To* DAVID, *smiling*] I've just remembered something else that is real.

DAVID. What's that?

HELEN. Duty.

[*Exit with baby. A summer sunrise shines pink through the conservatory, and lights up the room with summer morning light.* DAVID *returns to* DULCIE, *who sits absorbed*]

DAVID. Lady Skene, I asked to see you because — it is necessary for me to leave England very soon.

DULCIE. No — no!

DAVID. Yes — yes. I never use the word "honour" about my conduct, because every scamp has used it until it's the most counterfeit word in the language. But I've just learned that if I stay in England I shall injure very deeply a friend of mine, so naturally I'm going away.

DULCIE. But — tell me — [*Pause*] — what —

DAVID. If I stay I cannot continue an honest man. Will you let it rest there?

DULCIE. If you wish —

DAVID [*after a little pause, with some embarrassment*]. I have just heard — I scarcely know how to mention it — that you may be placed in a position of some difficulty.

DULCIE. You mean that Sir Brice is ruined. In one way it's a relief, because at any rate it will break up this life, and I'm so tired of it.

DAVID. Yet you thought you would like it on that night of the Hunt Ball.

DULCIE. Yes. I longed for it. Is life like that all through?

DAVID. Like what?

DULCIE. To long for a thing very much and to find it worthless, and then to long for something else much more — to be sure that this is worth having — to get it, and then to find that that is worthless too. And so on, and so on, and so on?

DAVID. I'm afraid life is very much like that on this particular planet.

DULCIE. Oh, but that would be awful if I found out that — [*Stops*]

DAVID. What?

DULCIE. Nothing. You remember that night of the Hunt Ball?

DAVID [*nods*]. It was the last time I saw my friend George Copeland. He died in Alaska six months after.

DULCIE. And you went away for over a year.

DAVID. No — only for a few weeks. After Copeland's funeral I went to the Mediterranean to choose a site for my observatory, and I was back in England within less than three months.

DULCIE. But we never saw you till last season. Where were you?

DAVID. When you were in the country, I was there; when you were in town I was in town too. I have never been far away from you. I have kept an account of every time I have seen you for the last three years.

DULCIE [*looks at him as if suddenly struck with a thought*]. Tell me — where were you two years ago last March?

DAVID. At Gerard's Heath — near you.

DULCIE [*suddenly*]. Did you — the night Rosy was — I mean the night of the second — it was a dreadful snowstorm —

DAVID. I remember.

DULCIE. One of my nurses said she saw some one in the garden. [*Looks at him*]

DAVID. It was I. Your life was in danger. I passed those two nights outside your window.

[DULCIE *with great affection, involuntarily puts her hand on his arm. He raises her hand and is about to kiss it.* HELEN *re-enters.* DAVID *rises*]

HELEN. Sir Brice has just come back and is in the smoking-room downstairs.

DULCIE [*turning*]. Look! It's morning.

DAVID. Good-bye.

DULCIE [*suddenly*]. No — I must have another word with you. Wait here a moment. Here is Sir Brice. Nell, take Mr. Remon on to the balcony for a minute or two and wait there with him till Sir Brice has gone upstairs.

[*Exeunt* DAVID *and* HELEN *through conservatory and on to balcony*]

[SIR BRICE *enters, looking a little flushed and dissipated*]

SIR BRICE [*staring at* DULCIE; *after a pause*]. Well?

DULCIE. Well?

SIR BRICE [*drops into a chair; whistles*]. Got rid of your friends?

DULCIE. All except Mr. Remon. He's on the balcony with Nell.

SIR BRICE. Oh! [*Pause. Whistles; takes some change out of his pocket — three shillings and threepence; places the coins very carefully and elaborately in a longitudinal position on the palm of his left hand, arranging the three shillings and the three pennies in a line, whistling carelessly*] That's our net fortune, my girl. [*Holding them up under her face*] That is our precise capital — three shillings and threepence. [*Whistles*] Not another farthing. And some thousand pounds' worth of debts.

DULCIE [*unconcerned*]. Indeed.

SIR BRICE [*with a sudden little burst of*

brutality — not too marked]. Look here! can't you get some money?

DULCIE. What do you mean?

SIR BRICE. *Get some money!* That's plain English, isn't it?

DULCIE. I don't understand you.

SIR BRICE. This fellow Remon is devilish fond of you. Can't you get some money from him?

DULCIE. Hush! Borrow money from him!

SIR BRICE [*suggestively*]. You needn't borrow. [DULCIE *looks at him inquiringly*] Now can't you get some?

[DULCIE *looks at him for a moment; she raises her fan to strike him; sees* DAVID, *who has entered from conservatory.* HELEN *stands at conservatory door*]

DAVID. Lady Skene, I have been obliged to overhear what has just been said. To-morrow morning I leave for the South of France, and I shall be quite inaccessible for some years. My bankers will have orders to send you a cheque-book and to honour your signature to any extent that you are likely to require. [DULCIE *makes a protest*] If you please — if you please. As I shall be away from England there cannot be the least slur upon you in accepting it. Miss Larondie, you will be with your sister, always. She will be in your care — always. [*Shakes hands with* HELEN] Be very kind to her. Never leave her. Good-bye.

DULCIE. But I — cannot — take —

DAVID [*silencing her*]. If you please — It is my last request. Good-bye.

[SIR BRICE, *who has been sitting all the while, listening, rises.* DAVID *looks at him for half a moment; looks at* DULCIE.]

Good-bye. [*Exit*]

[*Nine months pass between Acts II and III*]

ACT III

SCENE. — *Private sitting-room at the Hôtel Prince De Galles, Nice.*

A rather handsome modern room furnished in French hotel fashion. Two long windows, right, curtained. Door at back. Door left. Small card table down stage, left, with several packs of cards loosely on it. The whole floor round the table strewn with cards. Discover SIR BRICE *in evening dress seated left of table, aimlessly and mechanically playing with the cards. After a few seconds* DULCIE, *in dinner dress, enters from door at back, crosses to the window and stands looking out, having taken no notice of* SIR BRICE. *As she enters he leaves off playing with the cards for a moment, looks at her.*

SIR BRICE [*in rather a commanding tone, a little brutal*]. Come here.

[DULCIE *takes no notice. A little pause*]

SIR BRICE [*louder*]. D'ye hear? Come here.

[DULCIE *comes down to him, does not speak. He looks up at her. Her face is quite blank, looking indifferently in front of her*]

SIR BRICE [*begins playing with cards again*]. I've lost over six hundred pounds.

[DULCIE *takes no notice*]

SIR BRICE [*dashes the pack of cards under his feet, stamps on them*]. Damn and *damn* the cards!

[DULCIE *takes no notice. Slight pause*]

SIR BRICE [*roars out*]. The hotel people have sent up their bill again with a request for payment.

[*Slight pause.* DULCIE *goes back to the window, stands there looking out. Pause*]

SIR BRICE [*roars out furiously*]. Why the devil don't you get something for that deafness of yours! [*Suddenly jumps up, goes up to her, seizes her hands, turns her round*] Now look here —

[HOTEL SERVANT *enters, with letter on tray.* SIR BRICE *desists. The* HOTEL SERVANT *brings the letter to* DULCIE, *who crosses and takes it. Exit* SERVANT. DULCIE *opens letter, reads it*]

SIR BRICE. Well? [DULCIE *rings bell*] Well?

[SERVANT *enters*]

DULCIE [*in cold, equable tone, to* SIR BRICE]. Mr. Edward Remon wishes to see me. He asks me to excuse his being in fancy dress. He's going to the Opera Ball. Shall I see him here or in the hall?

SIR BRICE. Here.

DULCIE. [*To* SERVANT] Show Mr. Remon here. [*Exit* SERVANT]

Sir Brice. [*To* Dulcie] Where's his brother, the astronomer?

Dulcie. At his observatory, I suppose. I've not seen him since the night we began to live upon him.

[Hotel Servant *opens door, announces* Mr. Edward Remon. Eddie *enters, dressed as Pierrot for the fancy dress ball. Exit* Servant]

Eddie [*all through the Act very excited*]. How d'ye do? [*To* Dulcie; *shakes hands with her. To* Sir Brice] How d'ye do?

Sir Brice. How d'ye do?

[*Looks meaningly at* Dulcie *and exit left*]

Eddie. So good of you to excuse this dress.

Dulcie. Your brother?

Eddie. He's down in the town with me to-night. We've been dining at the Café de Paris. I've taken three glasses of champagne — anything more than a spoonful makes me tipsy, and so, with that and this dress, and our journey to Africa, I'm quite mad to-night.

Dulcie. Africa!

Eddie. We start early to-morrow morning to the deadliest place on the West Coast.

Dulcie. Not your brother?

Eddie. Yes. We're going to watch the transit of Venus, and as there was a jolly lot of fever there all the other astronomers rather funked it. So Davy has fitted out an expedition himself. [Dulcie *shows great concern.* Eddie *rattles on*] I'm going to have a spree to-night. I've never been drunk in my life, and I thought I should like to try what it's like — because — [*tossing up a coin*] it's heads we come back alive and prove Davy's theory about sun-spots — and it's tails we leave our bones and all our apparatus out there. It's tails — we're as dead as door-nails. [*Sees* Dulcie's *pained face*] Lady Skene — I'm so sorry —

Dulcie. We've been three weeks in Nice. Why hasn't your brother come to see me?

Eddie. A mistaken sense of duty. Davy has the oddest notions about duty. He thinks one ought to do it when it's unpleasant. So do I when I'm in my right clothes, and my right senses, but now I'm half tipsy, and have got a fool's cap on, I can see quite plainly that duty's all moonshine. Duty is doing exactly what one likes, and it's Davy's duty to come to you. And the fool is just breaking his heart for a sight of you. Shall I find him and bring him?

Dulcie. Where is he?

Eddie. He's in the town getting everything ready for to-morrow. Shall I find him?

Dulcie [*looking at her watch*]. Quarter to eleven. I may be alone in half an hour. Yes, bring him to me here.

Eddie. Hurrah! — *Au revoir.*

[Sir Brice *appears at the same door, looks after* Eddie, *who exits, saying* "Adieu." Sir Brice *shuts door; enters*]

Sir Brice. [*To* Dulcie] Well?

[Dulcie *does not reply, goes to her room at back,* Sir Brice *follows her, the door is closed in his face and a lock is heard to turn.* Sir Brice *shakes the door handle, kicks the door, looks vicious and spiteful, comes down a step or two, kicks a hassock*]

[Servant *enters, announcing* Mr. Lushington. *Enter* Monty. Sir Brice *nods*]

Monty. Well, dear chum! [*Looking round at the cards on the floor*] Did you give Fancourt his revenge?

Sir Brice. Damn the cards.

Monty. By all means. How's Lady Skene?

Sir Brice [*mutters*]. —mn Lady Skene.

Monty. By all means.

Sir Brice. You're married, Lushington —

Monty. I am three months a bridegroom.

Sir Brice. Why the devil did you get married?

Monty. Because I ascertained that my wife would have seven thousand a year. Why did you?

Sir Brice. Because I was a silly fool.

Monty. Well, there couldn't be two better reasons for getting married.

Sir Brice [*furious with his cards*]. —mn everything and everybody.

Monty. By all means. And now we've reached finality and are utterly the sport of destiny, will you do me a good turn?

Sir Brice. What?

Monty. I'm going to take a lady to the Opera Ball, and I fear Lady

Clarice will be dull, or I should say *restless*, in my absence. I know you will be going to the Cercle d'Amerique to wreck your farthing chance of eternity at poker.

Sir Brice. Well?

Monty. It would momentarily reinstate your celestial hopes if you would tell Lady Skene that I'm going to the Club with you, and persuade her to spend the lonely hours of her widowhood with Lady Clarice in number one-four-three. They will doubtless tear our characters to rags, but that will keep them from the worse mischief of interfering with us.

Sir Brice. Will you do me a good turn?

Monty. Anything in my power.

Sir Brice. Lend me a couple of hundred pounds.

Monty. My dear Bricey. If my I. O. U., or my name, or my presence, is good for anything at the Cercle d'Amerique, you're welcome to it.

Sir Brice. Will you come with me and set me afloat for a quarter of an hour?

Monty. Certainly.

Sir Brice. I'll ask Lady Skene. [*Goes up to the door at back, raps*] Are you there? [*A little louder*] Are you there?

Monty. Throw in a "my dear," Bricey, or some such trifle. Its effect will be in proportion to its scarcity.

Sir Brice. My dear! [*Rapping still*] Mr. Lushington has called. [*Rapping*] Do you hear, my love? [*With a grim sneer on the last word. The door is a little opened*] [Sir Brice *forces his way in*] Lady Clarice wants to know if you will go and sit with her while —

[*The remainder of sentence is lost by the closing of door after him*]

[Lady Clarice *enters door, with opera cloak*]

Monty [*showing surprise, which he instantly checks*]. Where so gay and free, my love?

Clarice [*looking him straight in the face very determinedly*]. To the Opera Ball.

Monty. Oh.

Clarice. You're going to take that woman.

Monty. I know many *ladies*, but no *women*.

Charley [*her voice heard outside*]. Yes. See if Mr. Lushington is there, and say a lady is waiting for him in the hall — oh, he's in there; I'll go in.

[Monty *is going.* Lady Clarice *makes a little movement to intercept him*]

Monty [*in a low voice*]. Don't be foolish.

Charley [*her voice at door, outside*]. Aren't you nearly ready, Monty? [*Appears at door, sees* Lady Clarice, *takes in the situation at a glance, has a slight shock, but instantly recovers herself. Runs to* Lady Clarice, *brimming with affection*] *Darling*, are you going too? So pleased! So charmed! How sweet of you!

[*Offers to kiss* Lady Clarice]

Clarice [*indignantly*]. How dare you!

Monty [*stepping between them*]. Hush! [*To* Clarice] What's the use of having a row here, or anywhere? For Heaven's sake, do be a good sensible girl, and don't shatter the happiness of our married life before — before we know where we are. Charley and I are going to the Opera Ball, will you come with us?

Clarice [*indignant*]. What!

Monty. Or go by yourself. Or go with any one you please. Or go anywhere or do anything in the world you like. Only don't make a scene here.

Clarice. My father shall know.

Monty. Very well. Very well. We'll discuss that by and by. But do recognise once and for all the futility of rows. You'd better come with us.

[*Enter* Sir Brice]

Clarice. Come with you?

Charley [*begins*]. My dear Clarice, I assure you —

Monty [*stops* Charley *with a warning look*]. For Heaven's sake, Clarice, whatever we do, do not let us make ourselves ridiculous. [Monty *snatches up* Lady Clarice's *arm. She reluctantly allows him to do so*] All right, Bricey. Sorry I can't come with you to the Club — but I've persuaded Lady Clarice and Lady Shalford to come to the Opera Ball with me. Bye, bye, dear crony, our love to Lady Skene. Hope you will have as pleasant an evening as we shall — Ta! Ta!

[*Exit with great animation,* Lady Clarice *holding reluctantly and aloof on one arm,* Charley *more affectionate on the other.* Sir Brice *goes to* Dulcie's *door,*

throws it wide open, stands back, calls]

SIR BRICE. Now, will you let us understand each other once for all?

[DULCIE *enters, looks at him without speaking*]

SIR BRICE. I want some money. This fellow Remon has offered you his purse to any extent. Get a few hundreds for me to go on with.

DULCIE. No.

SIR BRICE. You won't? Then why did you begin to take his money?

DULCIE. Because I was weak, because you bullied me, and because I knew I was welcome.

SIR BRICE. Very good. The same reasons continue. You're weak, I'm a bully, and you're welcome. Aren't you welcome, eh? Aren't you welcome?

DULCIE. I believe I am welcome to every penny he has in the world.

SIR BRICE. He loves you?

DULCIE. Yes.

SIR BRICE. And you love him?

DULCIE [*looking straight at* SIR BRICE *very fearlessly and calmly*]. With all my heart.

SIR BRICE. And you aren't ashamed to tell me?

DULCIE. Is there anything in your past life that you have taken the trouble to hide from me? Have you ever openly or secretly had an attachment to any living creature that does you as much credit and so little shame as my love for David Remon does to me?

SIR BRICE. All right. Go on loving him. You needn't hesitate. He expects a fair exchange — if he hasn't already got it.

DULCIE [*very calmly*]. That's a lie, and you know it is.

SIR BRICE. Very well. It's a lie. I don't care one way or the other. Get me some money.

DULCIE. You have had the last farthing that you will ever touch of David Remon's money.

SIR BRICE. All right. [*Jumps up very determinedly*] Then you've seen the last you will see of your child for some years to come.

DULCIE [*aroused*]. What! you will hit me through my child!

SIR BRICE. I think *my* child's health requires a change for a few years — a different climate from you and myself. We will go upon a little tour by ourselves, shall we? to — where the devil shall we go? I don't care. I shall send Rosy away to-morrow morning. D'ye hear?

DULCIE. I hear.

SIR BRICE. If I don't see you again to-night, get her ready by to-morrow morning. [*Exit*]

DULCIE [*stands for a moment or two quiet, then bursts into a fit of ironic laughter*] Nell! [*Goes to the door at back, calls out*] Nell! Nell! Come here!

[HELEN *enters*]

HELEN. What's the matter?

DULCIE. Nell, old girl, have you got such a thing as a Church Service about you?

HELEN. Church Service?

DULCIE. I want you to tell me the end and meaning of marriage. There's something about it in the Church Service, isn't there? I did go through it once, I know, but I've forgotten what it's all about. *What does it mean?*

HELEN. Marriage?

DULCIE. Yes. Oh, I know! It's one of Mr. Remon's games.

HELEN. Games?

DULCIE. Yes. He says men and women are playing a lot of queer games on earth that they call religion, love, politics, and this and that and the other — marriage must be one, and it's the funniest of them all! It's a two-handed game like — like cribbage, or tossing up. You choose your partner — head's he's a good 'un, then you're in clover; tails he's a bad' un, then, it's purgatory and inferno for you for the rest of your life, unless you're a man. It's all right if you're a man. The same game as before, choose your partner — heads she's a good 'un, then you're in clover; tails she's a bad 'un, then you cut her, and toss up again and again, until you do get a good 'un. That's the game — that's the game — and it's a splendid game for a man.

[BLANCHFLOWER, *in evening dress, pops in*]

BLANCHFLOWER. How d'ye do, Lady Skene? Am I in the way, eh?

DULCIE. Enter! Enter! Enter! You're just in time. Help us solve this mighty question.

BLANCHFLOWER. Something important, eh?

DULCIE. No, only marriage.

BLANCHFLOWER. What about it?

DULCIE. Well — what about it? Give us your opinion. There's something mystical about it, isn't there? Nell, where's that Church Service? Something mystical?

BLANCHFLOWER. Well, yes; and — hum? eh? [*happy thought*] — something ideal —

DULCIE. Mystical and ideal. Go on, Nell.

HELEN. I'd rather not. I don't like to hear you mocking at marriage.

DULCIE [*laughing*]. Mocking at marriage! Oh, my God! is it women who have married bad men that mock at marriage? Make haste, make haste! [*Dashing her hands on the chair*] Marriage is a mystical, ideal state — isn't there something in the Service about physical? Go on, Nell, go on — help us out. Go on! What have we left out?

HELEN. The wife's duty.

DULCIE. Yah. Yah. Yah.

[*This is very quiet and calm, with a pause between each Yah, very different from the excited Yah! Yah! Yah! Yah! of the second Act*]

HELEN. To her husband to keep her vows. To herself to keep herself pure and stainless, because it is her glory, as it is a man's glory to be brave and honest.

DULCIE [*same position, same tone*]. Yah. Yah. Yah.

HELEN. And to society, to her nation, because no nation has ever survived whose women have been immoral.

DULCIE [*suddenly springing up, sitting up upright in the chair*]. And the men?

HELEN. I don't know whether it's a man's duty to be moral. I'm sure it's a woman's.

DULCIE. Oh, then marriage is a moral state, eh — at least for women, eh, Mr. Blanchflower?

BLANCHFLOWER [*who has shown symptoms of great discomfort through the interview*]. Ye — es — decidedly marriage is — or — a — should be a moral state.

DULCIE [*jumping up vigorously*]. Ah, now we've got it! Now we can go ahead! Marriage is a physical, mystical, ideal, moral game. Oh, I hate these words, moral, ideal. How if it isn't ideal? Suppose it's horribly, horribly real. How if it isn't moral? Suppose it's horribly, horribly immoral! Moral! Moral!! Moral!!! Is there anything under God's sun so immoral, ah — guess it — guess it — to be married to a man one hates! And you go on plastering it and poulticing it and sugaring it over with "moral" and "ideal" and "respectable," and all those words that men use to cheat themselves with. It isn't moral to be married to a man one hates! It isn't ideal! It isn't mystical! It's hateful! It's martyrdom!

[*A long pause*]

BLANCHFLOWER [*calm, with a real touch of feeling*]. My dear Lady Skene, I won't pretend to offer you advice —

DULCIE [*has recovered from her outburst, now speaks in a very calm, indifferent, matter-of-fact tone*]. It doesn't matter. You're going to the ball?

BLANCHFLOWER. I was going — but if I can help you in any way — [*Struck with the idea*] My uncle, Canon Butterfield, is here for the winter. He suffers from liver, and has written a book on Socinianism. If you want any spiritual advice, I'm sure you couldn't do better.

DULCIE. What is Socinianism? Is it anything to do with marriage?

BLANCHFLOWER. Well — ah — no. Shall I send him?

DULCIE. No, I won't trouble you. I'll think this out for myself.

BLANCHFLOWER. Well, if you ever do need a clergyman, don't forget my uncle. You can't do better. Or if at any time I can be of any use —

DULCIE. Thank you. Good-night.

BLANCHFLOWER [*shaking hands very sympathetically*]. Good-bye. [*Exit*]

DULCIE [*suddenly*]. Nell! [HELEN *comes to her*] Take Rosy up at once, dress her, get out of the hotel by the servants' way so that you don't meet Sir Brice — take her over to Beaulieu to the Hôtel des Anglais, and wait there till to-morrow morning. I'll send you a message what to do.

[SERVANT *enters, announces* MR. REMON — MR. EDWARD REMON. *Enter* DAVID *and* EDDIE, *still in Pierrot's dress.* HELEN *shows some surprise*]

[*Exit* SERVANT]

DULCIE. Quick, Nell, do as I tell you.

HELEN [*looking at* DAVID *and* EDDIE]. Promise me —

DULCIE. What?

HELEN. You'll take no step till you've seen me.

DULCIE. I promise. Make haste. Come here and tell me when Rosy's ready.

HELEN [*comes to* DAVID, *shakes hands with him*]. You heard her promise.

DAVID. She shall keep it.

[*Exit* HELEN *at back*]

EDDIE. I've brought him, Lady Skene. I'm off to the ball. I'm not so tipsy now as I was, but I'm going to have my fling. It's my only chance of going to the devil. Davy, where shall I meet you?

DAVID. I'll come to the Opera House for you. Wait for me there.

EDDIE. Come as soon as you can, won't you? You come too, Lady Skene. You can't think how jolly it is to have no duty and no conscience and no faith and no future, no anything but pleasure and life! Do come! Let's all be fools for once in our lives! Let's be monkeys again! Come on! Come on!

[*Exit. As soon as he has gone,* DAVID *and* DULCIE, *who have been standing on opposite sides of the room, go to each other very calmly. They meet in the middle of the room, take each other's hands. He raises hers to his lips.* DAVID'S *appearance has changed since the last Act; he is more worn and spiritual, a little greyer, very calm at first, an unearthly look in his face. They stand looking at each other for some moments*]

DULCIE. You're changed! You're not well!

DAVID. Quite well. So well, I feel no ill can ever happen to me.

DULCIE. Why did you not come to me before?

DAVID. I'd been able to do you a service. I didn't wish you to think that I had any claim on you.

DULCIE. Ah, you shouldn't misunderstand me. I could never misunderstand you like that. I've taken your money. I knew I was welcome, because — if I were rich and you were poor, I would give you all I had.

DAVID. Ah! Take all I have!

DULCIE. Not another farthing.

DAVID. Why not?

DULCIE. I would be proud to owe all my happiness, all my comfort to you. I have been proud these last six months to think that my child's very bread came from you.

DAVID. Ah! [*Coming nearer to her*]

DULCIE. I would only have taken just sufficient for necessaries — but he forced me. I was weak. Now the end has come. I won't waste any more of your money in this [*pointing to the cards*] and racing, and — I don't know what.

DAVID. Tell it all.

DULCIE. Things can't go on as they are. [*Smiling*] Do you remember the Scotchman who lost his mother-in-law and his aunt and three cousins, all in one epidemic? He said it was "just reedeeclous." Things are "just reedeeclous" with me. [*Laughing*] Sir Brice has threatened to take Rosy away from me.

DAVID. No!

DULCIE. Yes! I'm sending Nell to Beaulieu with her to-night. I don't know what will happen. I don't think I care much. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters. [*Smiling. Then with sudden alarm*] Yes — this journey of yours to Africa. Must you go?

DAVID. I must. I've been waiting for years for this chance. If I succeed, it will crown all my life's work.

DULCIE. But it's dangerous.

DAVID. I take a doctor and drugs. Besides, I bear a charmed life.

DULCIE. But this fever, — Eddie says it is deadly.

DAVID [*with great calmness, looking away*]. It will pass me. But if it kills me, I must go.

DULCIE. No, no, no.

DAVID. Yes, yes, yes. I'm pledged. All my world, the little world that takes an interest in me, is watching me. There's the hope of a great prize. It's my one chance of snatching the poor little laurel-wreath that we mortals call immortality.

DULCIE. But can't you go some other time?

DAVID. I must be at my post, especially as it is a little dangerous, — that makes it the post of honour. I've delayed everything till the last moment that I might be near you till the very end.

DULCIE. The end! Then this is the end? I shall never see you again.

DAVID. Yes. When I return.

DULCIE [*shaking her head*]. You will not return. [*Looking at him very keenly and closely*] Tell me, in your heart of hearts do you not know that you will never come back? [DAVID *is about to speak*] Ah no — tell me the truth!

DAVID [*slowly and fatefully*]. I wonder how it is that when one has carefully weeded out all the old superstitions from one's mind, a crop of new superstitions springs up more foolish than the old ones. I've lived up there so long I've grown morbid. I've an attack of the silliest form of superstition — a presentiment.

DULCIE. Ah, I knew it!

DAVID. In six months I shall laugh at it. We will laugh at it together.

DULCIE [*determinedly*]. You shall not go!

DAVID. I must. I'm working with my comrades all over the world. I've undertaken this part of the work. If I don't carry it out I break faith with them and spoil their work too. All the good fellows who are going with me and sharing in my dangers are waiting for me at Marseilles. I can't leave them in the lurch — I can't — you would not have me do it! Say you wouldn't have me stamp myself a coward, a deserter.

DULCIE. No, no. But I don't want you to go. [*Approaching him*] If I asked you to stay —

DAVID. You will not — [*Going towards her*] You will not [*a little nearer*] ask me to stay. [*She looks at him — gradually they go closer to each other, and his manner changes from a calm, dreamy, fateful tone to a fierce, hoarse, passionate tone*] Do you know what it means if I stay? Dulcie!

DULCIE. You never called me that before.

DAVID [*clasping her*]. I've never been so near to you. Dulcie! [*With sudden, mad abandonment, clasping her passionately*] Yes, I'll stay! I'll stay! Tell me to stay because — because — you love me.

DULCIE. Stay — because — ah, you know I love you!

DAVID. Eddie's right. Let's be fools to-night! Let's live to-night! I'm hungry for you! Dulcie, tell me once again that you love me.

DULCIE. No — no. Forget it. What have I said? What shall we do?

DAVID. I don't know. What does it matter? We will go to this ball — anything — anywhere! Our lives are in our own hands. Come with me.

[SIR BRICE *enters. He shuts the door, stands against it, his feet a little sprawling, his hands in his pockets, looking at them maliciously. Long pause.* HELEN *enters at the other door. Another pause. She beckons* DULCIE]

HELEN. Dulcie!

[*Indicates the inside room.* DULCIE *goes up to her*]

[*Exit* HELEN. DULCIE *at the door looks at the two men. Exit* DULCIE. *The two men are left alone. Another slight pause.* SIR BRICE *walks very deliberately up to* DAVID. *The two men stand close to each other for a moment or two*]

SIR BRICE. You've come to settle your little account, I suppose?

DAVID. I owe you nothing.

SIR BRICE. But I owe you six thousand pounds. I haven't a penny in the world. I'll cut you for it, double or quits.

DAVID. I don't play cards.

SIR BRICE. You'd better begin.

[*Rapping on the table with the cards*]

DAVID [*very firmly*]. I don't play cards with *you*.

SIR BRICE. And I say you shall.

DAVID [*very stern and comtemptuous*]. I don't play cards with you.

[*Going towards door*]

SIR BRICE. You refuse?

DAVID. I refuse.

SIR BRICE. Once for all, will you give me a chance of paying back the six thousand pounds that Lady Skene has borrowed from you? Yes or no?

DAVID. No.

SIR BRICE. No?

DAVID [*very emphatically*]. No. [*Goes to door, suddenly turns round, comes up to him*] Yes. [*Comes to the table*] I *do* play cards with you. You want my money. Very well. I'll give you a chance of winning all I have in the world.

SIR BRICE [*after a look of astonishment*]. Good. I'm your man. Any game you like, and any stakes.

DAVID [*very calm, cold, intense tone all through*]. The stakes on my side are some two hundred thousand pounds. The stakes on your side are — your wife and child.

SIR BRICE [*taken aback*]. My wife and child!

DAVID. Your wife and child. Come — begin! [*Points to the cards*]

SIR BRICE [*getting flurried*]. My wife and child? [*Puts his hands restlessly through his hair, looks intently at* DAVID. *Pause*] All right. [*Pause. Cunningly*] I value my wife and child very highly.

DAVID. I value them at all I have in the world. [*Pointing to cards*] Begin!

SIR BRICE. You seem in a hurry.

DAVID. I believe I haven't six months to live. I want to make the most of those six months. If I have more I want to make the most of all the years. Begin!

SIR BRICE [*wipes his face with his handkerchief*]. This is the first time I've played this game. We'd better arrange conditions.

DAVID. There's only one condition. We play till I'm beggared of every farthing I have, or till you're beggared of them. Sit down!

SIR BRICE [*sits down*]. Very well. [*Pause*] What game?

DAVID. The shortest.

SIR BRICE. Simple cutting?

DAVID. What you please. Begin!

SIR BRICE. There's no hurry. I mean to have a night's fun out of this.

DAVID. Look at me. Don't trifle with me! I want to have done with you. I want them to have done with you. I want to get them away from you. Quick! I want to know now — now — this very moment — whether they are yours or mine. Begin.

SIR BRICE [*shuffles the cards*]. All right. What do we cut for?

DAVID. Let one cut settle it.

SIR BRICE. No. It's too much to risk on one throw.

DAVID. One cut. Begin.

SIR BRICE. It's too big. I can't. I like high play, but that's too high for me. [DAVID *remains at table, very calm; does not stir through all the scene;* SIR BRICE *walking about*] No, by Jove! I'll tell you what I'll do. Three cuts out of five. Damn it all! I'm game! Two out of three. By Jove, two out of three! Will that do?

DAVID. So be it! Sit down! Shuffle.

[SIR BRICE *sits down; begins shuffling the cards. All through the scene he is nervous, excited, hysterical, laughing.* DAVID *as cold as a statue*]

SIR BRICE [*having shuffled*]. Now then. Who cuts first?

[*The two men stare fixedly at each other*]

[DULCIE *enters at back*]

DULCIE [*surprised*]. Mr. Remon! No! No! Not that! Not that!

DAVID [*coming down, warning her off with a motion of his hand*]. If you please. Stand aside for a moment.

[*Offers the cards to* SIR BRICE *to cut*]

SIR BRICE. Ace counts lowest.

DAVID. As you will. Cut!

[SIR BRICE *cuts*]

SIR BRICE. King! By Jove! King! Cut! [DAVID *cuts*]

SIR BRICE. Nine! One to me! By Jove! one to me! [*To* DULCIE] Give us up some of those cards, will you?

[DAVID *by a gesture stops her; takes up the pack that* SIR BRICE *has broken and shuffles them*]

SIR BRICE. Shuffle up. By Jove! if I win —

DULCIE. Mr. Remon, you'll not play any more?

DAVID [*very gently*]. Stand aside, please.

SIR BRICE. No. Let her shuffle for us. She's in it, isn't she?

DULCIE. What do you mean? What are you playing for?

SIR BRICE. You'd like to know, would you? What are we playing for? I'll tell you. We're playing for you and your child!

DULCIE [*suddenly*]. What? [*Shows great horror and astonishment*] Mr. Remon! It's not so? It's not so? [*To* DAVID] What are you playing for?

DAVID. He has said. For you and your child. If I win, will you abide by the bargain?

[*Very long pause — she looks from one to the other*]

DULCIE. Yes.

DAVID [*puts cards on table*]. Cut.

[*They both shuffle cards*]

SIR BRICE [*very excited, laughing, nervous*]. You've got to win both now. You know that?

DAVID. I know.

SIR BRICE [*cuts*]. Ten. Not bad. You've got to beat it. Cut! [DAVID *cuts*] Queen! One each! Now for the final, d'ye hear? This is final. If I win — [*Walking about excitedly; pours out a glass of brandy — drinks*] I'll cut first! No! Damn it all! you cut first! [*Holding cards.* DAVID *cuts*] Six. [*To* DAVID, *suddenly*] Suppose I win — you'll pay me? You mean to pay me?

DAVID. I shall pay you every farthing.

SIR BRICE. What security do you give me?

DAVID. My word in the presence of the woman I love.

SIR BRICE [*walks about*]. Let me be a moment.

DAVID. Cut.

SIR BRICE. [*To* DULCIE]. You're anxious, are you? I'm going to win! I mean it! I'm going to win! [*To* DAVID] Now! [DAVID *holds cards;* SIR BRICE *cuts*] My God! I've lost!

DAVID [*throws down the card-table; leaps at him; catches hold of him by the throat*]. Yes, you've lost! She's mine! [*Gets him down on his knees*] You've cheated me of her all these years! You've cheated me of her love, cheated me of the fatherhood of her child, you've dragged her down, you've dishonoured her! She's my wife now — my wife and child! Take your oath you'll never lay claim to them again! Swear it! [*Shaking him*]

SIR BRICE. She's yours! Take her! I'll never see her or her child again! I swear it! Take them!

DAVID. Dare to break your word — dare to lay a finger on her or her child — dare to show your face in the home that my love shall give to her — and whatever laws men have made to bind you and her together, I'll break them and rid her of you! D'ye hear? She's mine! She's mine! She's mine! [*Throws* SIR BRICE *back on the floor. To* DULCIE] My wife! My child! Come! You're mine!

[DAVID *seizes* DULCIE *in his arms and falls against door. Curtain begins to descend when* SIR BRICE *thrown down*]

ACT IV

SCENE. — *The Observatory on Mount Garidelli in the Maritime Alps, near Nice.*

A door, right. A large fireplace, with pine cones and pine logs ready laid, above door, right. At the back, seen through a large curtained doorway, is the circular Observatory with large telescope. This room is vaguely seen, the telescope being lighted by a shaft of moonlight at the beginning of the Act. On the left side, slantwise, a large window, with terrace outside, giving scenery of the Maritime Alps. A large armchair above the fireplace. On table and scattered about the room are a number of scientific books and astronomical instruments and apparatus. The window is curtained with Eastern curtains. As curtain rises the whole scene is dark except for the shaft of moonlight that falls on the telescope.

[*Enter* DAVID *and* DULCIE]

DAVID. Come in! Come to your home! My wife!

DULCIE [*cold, shuddering*]. Ah no — don't call me that — at least not yet.

DAVID. You're shivering! Let me give you some wine.

[*Goes to cupboard, brings out bottle and glass, which he fills, places them on table*]

DULCIE. No, no, tell me —

[*Goes to him, looks into his face*]

DAVID [*with great tenderness*]. Dulcie! Dulcie! What is it, dear? How cold you are. I'll light the fire. [*Lights fire, which is already laid with large pine cones and logs and quickly blazes up*] I'm your servant now. I've nothing to do all my life but wait on you. We shall soon have a blaze with these pine logs. My servants left me last night. I thought I should have no further use for them. I thought my life here was ended. Ended! My life has only begun this last hour. [*Clasping her*] Dulcie! Do you know where you are? You are in your home. Take off your hat and cloak, dear. [*Gently removes her cloak and puts it on chair*] There! [*Seats her at the fire in large chair*] This is your own hearth, dear, your own fireside. You are my bride! No bride was ever so welcome as you. Poor hands so cold. [*Takes her hands in his, rubs them; as he does so, they both at one moment see her wedding-ring.* DULCIE *withdraws her hand in shame. They look at each other horrified. A pause*] Give me your hand.

[*She holds it out. He takes off the ring, goes to window, draws aside the curtains, opens window, throws away the ring, comes back to her. The dawn outside begins and gradually rises into a full sunrise during progress of Act*]

DULCIE [*as he returns to her*]. Oh, you'll be very kind to me?

DAVID. I have no life, no ambition away from you. The world has gone from me. This journey to Africa — it was the object of my life — it's less than nothing to me now. I've thrown it away, I've forgotten it, because you asked me.

DULCIE. Ah no, you mustn't do that. Oh, I'm selfish to take you from your comrades, from your work. You must go and make this great discovery.

DAVID. I've made the one great discovery there was to make. It's the cunningest of them all. We astronomers have been puzzling all our lives to find out what gravitation is. I've found it out. Gravitation is love. It's love that holds together all this universe. It's love that drives every little atom in space to rush to every other little atom. There's love at the centre of the system. There's love at the centre of all things. No astronomer ever made a discovery equal to that! Dulcie, look at me! What ails you? What are you thinking of?

DULCIE. Nell and Rosy. They'll be here soon.

DAVID. Yes. They can't be long. Don't think of them. Think only of ourselves.

DULCIE. Why wouldn't you come with me to Beaulieu and bring them up here?

DAVID. I was afraid your sister would take you from me. I wanted to have you all to myself. When she comes here I wanted her to find you already in your home.

DULCIE. It's so strange.

DAVID. What is strange?

DULCIE. To be here with you — alone.

DAVID. It's not strange to me. You've been here so often already. In my loneliness I've pictured you here hundreds of times. I at my work in there, you in this chair by the fire, Rosy playing about the floor.

DULCIE. Rosy.

DAVID. She is my child now, as you are my wife. Dulcie, say you know we have done right.

DULCIE [*distracted*]. Right! Yes — yes — I suppose so! What else could we do? What else could I do!

DAVID. Say you know we have done *right*.

DULCIE. *Yes* — yes — I can't think now. [*Returning and throwing her arms round him*] I only know I love you.

DAVID [*clasping her madly*]. Dulcie, this is your home, this is our wedding-day. My bride!

DULCIE [*tearing herself from him*]. No, no — not now — not yet! My promise to Nell — I promised her I would take no step till I had seen her.

DAVID [*pursuing her, fiercely clasping her*] You've taken the step. You're mine —

DULCIE. No, no. [*Repulsing him again*] Let me think. Wait till Nell comes. Ah, don't think I don't love you. There's nothing I wouldn't do or suffer for you. There's not a thought in my heart that isn't yours. Say you know it! Say you know it!

DAVID. I know it. What then? Tell me what's in your heart.

DULCIE. I can't. Can't you guess?

DAVID. Guess — what?

DULCIE. Oh, it was horrible with him. There was no home, no family, no love. It seemed like a blasphemy of home to live with him. But this — I can't tell you how I feel — I don't think any man can understand it. It's only a woman, and not all women — not many women perhaps — but I feel it. I can't get rid of it. To live with you seems more horrible than the other. I cannot! I cannot! I cannot!

DAVID [*very calmly, very sweetly, very soothingly*]. Dearest, you mustn't talk like this. Heaven bear me witness you will come to me as pure as if I took you from your mother's side, as pure as if you had never known any kiss but your sister's.

[*Attempting to embrace her*]

DULCIE. Ah! [*Shrinking from him*] Don't I tell you, a man can't understand my feelings.

[*Looks at him half-loving, half-horrified; stands looking at him. A little pause*]

DAVID. [*Same soft, tender tone, very persuasive, very low, very sweet*] Dulcie, in a very little while you will grow to think of me as if I were your very husband — as I shall be; and with you, and your sister, and Eddie, and Rosy, we shall make one happy, one united family. [*Approaching her*]

DULCIE. Ah! that's it. I feel —

DAVID [*clasping her again*]. What?

DULCIE. We can't be a family that way. There's only one way of being a family.

DAVID. And that?

DULCIE. By the marriage and love of husband and wife.

DAVID. It is marriage I offer you. Dulcie, you must see there's no future for you away from me. Say you'll give yourself to me willingly. [*Pause*] I will not take you else. Give yourself to me!

DULCIE [*after a pause*]. I am yours.

DAVID. No. *Give* yourself to me — wholly, freely, willingly.

DULCIE. Oh! don't you see? I would give you myself — a thousand selves if I could. What is there in me that is worth giving, or worth your taking now?

DAVID. Everything, everything. Give yourself to me!

DULCIE. If I give you myself I give you the last four years with me. They are part of me. I shall only feel that I can never get rid of them. I cannot get rid of them. Every time you kiss me I shall see him beside us! I cannot! I cannot! I cannot! I cannot!

[*Pause.* EDDIE *looks in at window*]

EDDIE. Ho, ho, Davy! Ho, ho! Here we are!

DULCIE [*goes to window, goes up to him*]. My sister and Rosy, are they with you?

EDDIE [*pointing down below*]. Quite safe. Here they are. Look alive, Davy! We've no time to waste. I shall be ready in a twinkling. I'm half a fool, and half a wise man just now. In two minutes I shall be in my right senses — or in as many as I've got — and then — [*Passes by*]

DAVID. [*To* DULCIE] Dulcie, your sister is here. Tell her that henceforth you are my wife.

DULCIE. I am your slave, your dog, your anything! Take me if you will — take me! But kill me after. If you don't I shall kill myself.

[HELEN *enters at door, stands for a moment looking at one and then at the other*]

HELEN. Dulcie.

[DULCIE *goes to her, saying,* "Nell"]

DULCIE. Rosy — where is she?

HELEN [*pointing off*]. She's there. [DULCIE *is going.* HELEN *stops her*] Let me look at you. [DULCIE *looks frankly at her.* HELEN *smiles, kisses her*] Go to your baby. [*Exit* DULCIE. HELEN *shuts the door after* DULCIE] You've taken her from him?

[DAVID *nods*]

HELEN. For good and all?

DAVID. For good and all.

HELEN. Why have you brought her here?

DAVID. To make her my wife.

HELEN. Your wife? That is impossible unless —

DAVID. Unless?

HELEN. Unless her husband divorces her and takes her child from her.

DAVID. I've won her from him, her and the child. Don't come between us. Give them to me!

HELEN [*stops him*]. She is not mine to give. She is not yours to take. Your brother tells me you're going on this expedition to Africa this morning.

DAVID. I'm not going.

HELEN. Not going? But you have looked forward to it all your life!

DAVID. I've wasted all my life in such dreams and shadows as work and duty. What has it availed me? Now I see one chance of happiness before me, don't take it from me! Give them to me! [*She stops him*] I will have them!

[EDDIE *enters dressed ready to start*]

EDDIE. Davy, old boy, look alive! The men have got everything on the mules. We've not a moment to waste.

DAVID. I'm not going.

EDDIE. Not going? But they are all waiting for us. If we don't go, all the expeditions everywhere will be a failure. Davy, you aren't going to sell them all like a — like a — They'll call you a — well, you fill in the word.

DAVID. I'm not going.

EDDIE. But what excuse can we make?

DAVID. Any excuse you like — I've changed my mind.

HELEN [*with quiet sarcasm*]. Is that a good excuse for a soldier to make just as he's ordered into battle?

DAVID. I'm not a soldier.

HELEN. Yes, you are. We are all soldiers on this earth, bound to be loyal to every one of our comrades, bound to obey the great rules of life, whether they are easy or hard. Yes, and all the more bound when they are hard, when they may cost us our very life. You'll

go — you'll go, and leave her to me and Rosy?

DAVID. I love her! I love her!

HELEN. Then save her for her child. Save her to be a good mother to that little helpless creature she has brought into the world, so that when her girl grows up and she has to guide her, she'll not have to say to her child, "You can give yourself to this man, and if you don't like him you can give yourself to another, and to another, and so on. It doesn't matter. It was what I did!"

DAVID [*same tone*]. I love her! I love her! I love her! You sha'n't reason me out of my happiness!

HELEN [*stopping him*]. I can't reason at all. I can only feel, and I know my instinct is right. I know the woman who gives herself to another man while her husband is alive betrays her sex, and is a bad woman.

DAVID. I love her! I love her!
[*Going towards door*]

HELEN [*stopping him*]. Then make your love the best thing in her life, and the best thing in yours. You have loved her so well. You have made so many sacrifices for her. Make this one last sacrifice. Keep her pure for her child.

EDDIE. That's God's voice speaking to you now, Davy.

[DULCIE *enters very quietly, looking off*]

DULCIE. [*To* DAVID] She's asleep. Go and look at her.

[*Exit* DAVID. DULCIE *is about to follow.* HELEN *stops her*]

HELEN. Dulcie.

DULCIE. What?

HELEN. He's given his word to his comrades. Don't make him play the coward.

[DAVID *re-enters, much calmer*]

DAVID. Miss Larondie, I'll write to you from Marseilles. I have left everything in order for her. If by any chance I should not return —

DULCIE. Ah! [*Goes to him*]

DAVID. Take care of her while I'm away.

DULCIE. But if you do not return?

DAVID [*very calm, very bitter, very tender, with a little smile*]. Then — we shall have played our parts well in this little puppet-show, shall we not? Don't cry, my dear, why should you? If I were a soldier, you would tell me to go. We shall not be absent from each other long. Don't cry, dear. It's my duty to go, Dulcie. Be brave. Tell me to go.

DULCIE [*bows her head*]. Go. Go.

DAVID [*going from her some steps*]. I've played this great game of love like a fool, as men would say. Perhaps I've played the great game of life like a fool, too. If we are sacrificing ourselves for a shadow we are only doing what earth's best creatures have done before us. If duty is reality, we have done right. Right — wrong — duty — they may be all shadows, but my love for you is real. [DULCIE *is sobbing, he comes to her*] Hush! Hush, dear! We shall never know satiety. Our love will never grow stale and commonplace, will it? Dulcie, we've only thrown away the husks. We've kept the immortal part of our love — if there is an immortal part. Look! this is my mother's wedding ring. [*Taking a very thin gold ring from his little finger*] She gave it to me as she was dying. It has never left my finger since. I give it you in exchange for the one I took from you. Give me your hand. [DULCIE *gives it*] With this ring I thee wed. As she that bore me was pure, so I leave you pure, dear. Kiss me once — I've held you sacred! [*She kisses him*] Good-bye. No, stay. [*Pours out a glass of wine, gives it to her*] Drink with me. [*She takes the glass, drinks some of it. He takes it from her, drains it, dashes the glass on the floor, where it is shivered to atoms; he then turns very brightly and gaily to* EDDIE] Now Eddie — our work!

EDDIE. Ready, big brother!

DAVID. [*To* DULCIE] In six months from now, come to meet me, my wife, and bring our child. Or, it may be a little later — but come and meet me — my wife — a little later.

DULCIE. Where?

DAVID. In that little star in Andromeda. All's real there.

[*Exeunt* EDDIE *and* DAVID *through window*]

CURTAIN

[*If curtain is called up, show a picture of* DAVID *outside the window, in the full morning sunlight, the mountains covered with snow behind him;* EDDIE *is beside him drawing him away*]

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

(1895)

By Oscar Wilde

OSCAR WILDE

(1856–1900)

Wilde was the epitome of the *fin de siècle* spirit, and the *fin de siècle* spirit was a pose. Wilde himself was a pose; and his art, however much it may have been perfect in form and beautiful in expression, was, likewise, a pose. Critics have declared that the sincerity which should have gone into his art was put into his life. But Wilde's sincerity was of the self-indulgent kind, and his pose gave pleasure to himself, rather than covered any real tragedy of the soul. One might readily measure Wilde's life by the antithetical demands made by him upon it. For instance, he said:

> The two great turning-points of my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when Society sent me to prison.

This is true, in so far as both events resulted in the exact soundings of Wilde's character. While he was at Oxford he came under the influence of Ruskin, and what he then learned of art and what he then sensed of socialism proved of varying influence in the years to follow.

After having served his term in prison, and after having poured his repentance into "De Profundis", Wilde, still addicted to the brilliant phrase, for the first time used his brilliancy to cover the tragedy of a broken life.

He is representative of a period in English life and letters, interesting because of its inconsequence, because of its studied freedom which seems to have been framed solely to break through the shams of Victorian prudishness. The consequence is, this period of art and of literature was essentially one of neuroticism, not deserving the entire censure of Max Nordau, but still having its roots deep down in that nervous tissue which Max Nordau's scientific observation unerringly indicated. The Maeterlinck of this same period, in France, surrounded himself with a group of young men who burned themselves out in their art, and openly defied society. But Maeterlinck escaped the fumes which rose from the mood of the time, and came out into a healthier atmosphere. Oscar Wilde, under the same pernicious influences, succumbed to the mood which was not a new creation in literature, but which was a direct reflection of the mood of his life. Gaining for himself, as he did, the reputation of being the most brilliant exponent of what was called the "fleshly school of literature", Oscar Wilde infused into the British drama of his time a brilliancy which it had not known since the days of Sheridan. It was a brilliancy all the more to be accounted a distinct contribution, because it was based upon an unerring sense of life which Oscar Wilde had to such an extent that it reacted upon himself. He wrote in "De Profundis":

> I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring: I made art a philosophy and philosophy an art: I altered the

> minds of men and the colours of things: there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder. I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made of it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet; at the same time I widened its range and enriched its characterization. Drama, novel, poem in prose, poem in rhyme, subtle or fantastic dialogue, whatever I touched, I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty: to truth itself I gave what is false no less than what is true as its rightful province, and showed that the false and the true are merely forms of intellectual existence. I treated art as the supreme reality and life as a mere mode of fiction. . . . I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me. I summed up all systems in a phrase and all existence in an epigram.

Had Oscar Wilde exerted his genuine powers in other directions than in trying to sum up existence in an epigram, his name would not in itself conjure up so much that is unhealthy in English letters. There is no doubt, as he indicated, that it takes a genius to know how to live; but to burn up one's genius in Wilde's kind of living is bound sooner or later to result in disillusionment. Had that genius been combined with the talent which he confesses he put into his work, we would have had a greater art than remains to us of Wilde's making.

One of the truest things ever written about him is contained in an essay by Archibald Henderson. It was to the effect that "the crux of his mania was blindness to the truth that the man who is the lackey of his passion can never be the master of his fate."

A thorough reading of Wilde as a poet, as a novelist, as an essayist, and as a dramatist, will only accentuate the undoubted truth that his interest in life was far greater than his interest in art. His taste lay, not in his reticence of expression, but in passionate self-gratification. There is no more tragic incident of carelessness and waste than in Oscar Wilde's prostitution of his talent. And the tragedy is made all the more poignant by his realization, too late, that his life had been ill-spent. Confession is good for the soul, but Oscar Wilde's confession, in "De Profundis", came too late.

The atmosphere which fostered Wilde has been brilliantly treated in Holbrook Jackson's "The Eighteen-Nineties."

> "The Eighteen-Nineties" [he wrote] were so tolerant of novelty in art and ideas that it would seem as if the declining century wished to make amends for the several decades of intellectual and artistic monotony.

Coming, as he did, in an era of pose, — after he left Oxford, where he had shown his flexibility of spirit and his wide diversity of interest, Wilde began on his long career of the worship of beauty. And like all worshippers he became a fanatic. He tried to externalize that worship in peculiarity of expression, to say nothing of peculiarity of dress. How he was received in England is reflected in the cartoons and satires of Du Maurier, Burnand, and Gilbert, whose "Patience" is commentary on the æsthetic movement in the English art of the day. Wilde entered the decadent literary world, after having shown great aptitude for the classics, and a peculiar interest in the socializing of art, as championed by Ruskin.

To gain some idea of London's attitude toward Wilde in the period of the early

eighties, one must turn to *Punch* and examine the series of cartoons headed "Nincompoopiana." The reputation he made for himself in England preceded him on his first visit to America, whither he went, in 1882, to lecture, and where, on his arrival, he made the startling announcement at the custom-house that he had nothing to declare except his genius. While in the United States, he lectured in the spirit of being the High Priest of the new Æstheticism. When he went to Paris, he was received by De Goncourt, Daudet, Hugo, and Bernhardt. In 1883, he finally resided in London. And the following year he married Constance Mary Lloyd, settling in Tite Street, in a house decorated by Whistler. The relation between Wilde and Whistler is one of those strange histories that is an art in itself.

Between 1884 and 1892 Wilde wrote "The Picture of Dorian Gray", "The Happy Princess and Other Tales", "The House of Pomegranates", "The Soul of Man under Socialism", and "Intentions." His dramatic ability was largely compressed between the years 1892 and 1895, although in 1882 he had written "Vera; or, the Nihilists", and, in 1891, "The Duchess of Padua." His brilliant comedies, however, follow each other in rapid succession. "Lady Windermere's Fan" was given at the St. James's Theatre, on February 22, 1892, by George Alexander. "A Woman of No Importance" was produced by Beerbohm Tree, at the Haymarket Theatre, on April 19, 1893. "An Ideal Husband," under the management of Lewis Waller, was given at the Haymarket, on January 3, 1895, and the following month, on February 14, "The Importance of Being Earnest" was performed at the St. James's. His "Salomé", refused in 1893 by the British censor, was produced, in 1894, in Paris, having been written in French for Sarah Bernhardt. His other two dramatic endeavours are fragments, "La Sainte Courtisane" and "A Florentine Tragedy."

Wilde would have been a greater dramatic artist had he not taken the work of the theatre so lightly. Reading his plays in succession, one is struck by several predominant characteristics: the carelessness with which the plot is constructed, the triviality with which the character is conceived, and the brilliancy with which the style of the entire dialogue is embroidered with his wit. Structurally, Wilde invented no better than the average playwright in the France and the England of his day. We have selected for inclusion in the present volume "The Importance of Being Earnest" because it is more reckless in the youthfulness of its situation, and more fantastical in its combination of wit and situation than his other plays.

At times, when reading Wilde's dramas, one is impressed by the almost trivial way in which the dialogue is written, reflective of the French Conversations, — a style in vogue in the language books of the period. One is also impressed by the tendency, on the part of Wilde, to be more interested in his side interpretations, than in attempting to relate his dialogue to the characters with which he is dealing. Whenever he means to be sincere, as in parts of "Lady Windermere's Fan" and "A Woman of No Importance", one feels the lack of sincerity with which the attempt is made. A scoffer at sentimentality, he often fell into the most sentimental attitudes. One would expect not quite the perfect piece of work "The Importance of Being Earnest" assuredly is, because of the fact that its pivot — upon which the plot moves — is a pun. Wilde's dramatic excellence is uneven and surprising. "He who runs may read" might be changed, in the case of Oscar Wilde, to "he who runs, interprets." The larger part of "A Woman of No Importance" is given over to Wilde's trivial commentary on life — an unexpected commentary.

His social satires are intellectual feats. They strike one as being essentially youthful in their generalizations. Shaw caught the Wilde spirit in "You Never Can Tell", but the difference between Shaw and Wilde is this: that, whereas the latter flourished during the period known as the Oxford Movement, and during an era characterized by the Æsthetic Movement, he was never a passionate believer in either; the consequence being that, however sincerely he may have himself felt toward vital forces surrounding him, his reaction toward them was essentially inconsequent, if not trivial. On the other hand, Shaw's philosophy is deep-grounded, however casual his expression of it.

The mere details in the life of Oscar Wilde are too well known to need repeating. If he believed what he said when he wrote to Whistler, — "Be warned in time, James; and remain, as I do, incomprehensible. To be great is to be misunderstood," — he had his wish consummated. No man has been more reviled, more misrepresented, more under- and over-estimated than Oscar Wilde. He was the galvanic shock which did infinite harm to himself, but a great deal of good to the Victorian era. His is the type of genius that will probably become more recognized as time separates it from the pernicious influence of his life. Instinctively, he prophesied many things that were to happen in the dramatic world. He was the forerunner of Gordon Craig in his upholding of the "mask." One cannot say that, without Wilde, Shaw would not have been; but one can say that had Oscar Wilde possessed Shaw's social conscience, his plays would not have rung false. No matter how far we advance in moral questions, there still will remain in the universe a detestation of the "fleshly" in literature, and there seems to be more than ever a tendency to keep art attached to life rather than to support art for art's sake alone. That is why we still receive a physical repulsion in reading "Salomé." It is fundamentally neurotic and cannot be excused in the name of its undoubted art. Therefore, as a dramatist, whatever the limitations of Oscar Wilde's comedies, structurally, they will live because of their universality of wit.

"Wilde gave English Drama style," says the critic, P. P. Howe, "and robbed English Drama of its sincerity."

But on the whole Wilde's influence has not been very great on the English playwright, however much one may detect his style in Shaw, and note the imitation of his style in some of the comedies of W. Somerset Maugham.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By OSCAR WILDE

To

Robert Baldwin Ross

In Appreciation

In Affection

The acting rights to "The Importance of Being Earnest" are held by Charles Frohman (Inc.), Empire Theatre Building, New York City, to whom application must be made for the right to perform, either by amateurs or professionals.

The Scenes of the Play

ACT I

Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half Moon Street, W.

ACT II

The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.

ACT III

Drawing-room of the Manor House, Woolton.

Time — The Present

Place — London

CASTS OF INITIAL PERFORMANCES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

	St. James's Theatre, London, February 14, 1895	*Empire Theatre, New York, April 22, 1895*
JOHN WORTHING, J. P., *of the Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire*	Mr. George Alexander	Mr. Henry Miller
ALGERNON MONCRIEFF, *his friend*	Mr. Allen Aynesworth	Mr. William Faversham
REV. CANON CHASUBLE, D. D., *rector of Woolton*	Mr. H. H. Vincent	Mr. W. H. Crompton
MERRIMAN, *butler to Mr. Worthing*	Mr. Frank Dyall	Mr. J. P. Whitman
LANE, *Mr. Moncrieff's man-servant*	Mr. F. Kinsey Peile	Mr. E. Y. Backus
HON. GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX .	Miss Irene Vanbrugh	Miss Viola Allen
LADY BRACKNELL, *her mother* .	Miss Rose Leclercq	Miss Ida Vernon
CECILY CARDEW, *John Worthing's ward*	Miss Evelyn Millard	Miss Agnes Miller
MISS PRISM, *her governess* . .	Mrs. George Canninge	Miss May Robson

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

ACT I

Scene. — *Morning-room in* Algernon's *flat in Half Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.*

[Lane *is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased,* Algernon *enters*]

Algernon. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

Lane. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

Algernon. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately — anyone can play accurately — but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

Lane. Yes, sir.

[*Hands them on a salver*]

Algernon [*inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa*]. Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

Lane. Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

Algernon. Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

Lane. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

Algernon. Good heavens! Is marriage so demoralising as that?

Lane. I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

Algernon [*languidly*]. I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

Lane. No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

Algernon. Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

Lane. Thank you, sir.

[Lane *goes out*]

Algernon. Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

[*Enter* Lane]

Lane. Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[*Enter* Jack]

[Lane *goes out*]

Algernon. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

Jack. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

Algernon [*stiffly*]. I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

Jack [*sitting down on the sofa*]. In the country.

Algernon. What on earth do you do there?

Jack [*pulling off his gloves*]. When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

Algernon. And who are the people you amuse?

Jack [*airily*]. Oh, neighbours, neighbours.

Algernon. Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

Jack. Perfectly horrid! never speak to one of them.

Algernon. How immensely you must amuse them! [*Goes over and takes sandwich*] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

Jack. Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

Algernon. Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

Jack. How perfectly delightful!

Algernon. Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

Jack. May I ask why?

Algernon. My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

Jack. I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

Algernon. I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

Jack. How utterly unromantic you are!

Algernon. I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

Jack. I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

Algernon. Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven — [Jack *puts out his hand to take a sandwich.* Algernon *at once interferes*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it*]

Jack. Well, you have been eating them all the time.

Algernon. That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [*Takes plate from below*] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

Jack [*advancing to table and helping himself*]. And very good bread and butter it is too.

Algernon. Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

Jack. Why on earth do you say that?

Algernon. Well, in the first place, girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

Jack. Oh, that is nonsense!

Algernon. It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

Jack. Your consent!

Algernon. My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*Rings bell*]

Jack. Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily.

[*Enter* Lane]

Algernon. Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

Lane. Yes, sir. [Lane *goes out*]

Jack. Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

Algernon. Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

Jack. There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

[*Enter* Lane *with the cigarette case on a salver.* Algernon *takes it at once.* Lane *goes out*]

Algernon. I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [*Opens case and examines it*] However.

it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription inside, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

JACK. Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

ALGERNON. Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

JACK. I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

ALGERNON. Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

JACK. Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGERNON. Your aunt!

JACK. Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGERNON [*retreating to back of sofa*]. But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading*] 'From little Cecily with her fondest love.'

JACK [*moving to sofa and kneeling upon it*]. My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case.

[*Follows* ALGERNON *round the room*]

ALGERNON. Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle. 'From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack.' There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

JACK. It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGERNON. You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case*] 'Mr. Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany.' I'll keep this as a proof your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [*Puts the card in his pocket*]

JACK. Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

ALGERNON. Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

JACK. My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

ALGERNON. Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

JACK. Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

ALGERNON. I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

JACK. Well, produce my cigarette case first.

ALGERNON. Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa*]

JACK. My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

ALGERNON. Where is that place in the country, by the way?

JACK. That is nothing to you, dear

boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

ALGERNON. I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunburyed all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

JACK. My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

ALGERNON. The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

JACK. That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

ALGERNON. Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

JACK. What on earth do you mean?

ALGERNON. You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

JACK. I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere to-night.

ALGERNON. I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

JACK. You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

ALGERNON. I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, to-night. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

JACK. I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

ALGERNON. Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

JACK. That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

ALGERNON. Then your wife will. You don't seem to realise, that in married life three is company and two is none.

JACK [*sententiously*]. That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.

ALGERNON. Yes; and that the

happy English home has proved in half the time.

JACK. For Heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

ALGERNON. My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything now-a-days. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [*The sound of an electric bell is heard*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you to-night at Willis's?

JACK. I suppose so, if you want to.

ALGERNON. Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

[*Enter* LANE]

LANE. Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax.

[ALGERNON *goes forward to meet them. Enter* LADY BRACKNELL *and* GWENDOLEN]

LADY BRACKNELL. Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

ALGERNON. I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together.

[*Sees* JACK *and bows to him with icy coldness*]

ALGERNON. [*To* GWENDOLEN] Dear me, you are smart!

GWENDOLEN. I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr. Worthing?

JACK. You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN. Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions.

[GWENDOLEN *and* JACK *sit down together in the corner*]

LADY BRACKNELL. I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

ALGERNON. Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [*Goes over to tea-table*]

LADY BRACKNELL. Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN. Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am.

ALGERNON [*picking up empty plate in horror*]. Good Heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

LANE [*gravely*]. There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

ALGERNON. No cucumbers!

LANE. No, sir. Not even for ready money.

ALGERNON. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE. Thank you, sir. [*Goes out*]

ALGERNON. I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

LADY BRACKNELL. It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

ALGERNON. I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

LADY BRACKNELL. It certainly has changed its colour. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [ALGERNON *crosses and hands tea*] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you to-night, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

ALGERNON. I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you to-night after all.

LADY BRACKNELL [*frowning*]. I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs. Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

ALGERNON. It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [*Exchanges glances with* JACK] They seem to think I should be with him.

LADY BRACKNELL. It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

ALGERNON. Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

LADY BRACKNELL. Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind

whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailments goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

ALGERNON. I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. Of course the music is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music people don't talk. But I'll run over the programme I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

LADY BRACKNELL. Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [*Rising, and following* ALGERNON] I'm sure the programme will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

GWENDOLEN. Certainly, mamma.

[LADY BRACKNELL *and* ALGERNON *go into the music-room,* GWENDOLEN *remains behind*]

JACK. Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN. Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

JACK. I do mean something else.

GWENDOLEN. I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

JACK. And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence . . .

GWENDOLEN. I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

JACK [*nervously*]. Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

GWENDOLEN. Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [JACK *looks at her in amazement*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits I am told: and my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

JACK. You really love me, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN. Passionately!

JACK. Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

GWENDOLEN. My own Ernest!

JACK. But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

GWENDOLEN. But your name is Ernest.

JACK. Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

GWENDOLEN [*glibly*]. Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

JACK. Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think the name suits me at all.

GWENDOLEN. It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

JACK. Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

GWENDOLEN. Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations. . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

JACK. Gwendolen, I must get christened at once — I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

GWENDOLEN. Married, Mr. Worthing?

JACK [*astounded*]. Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

GWENDOLEN. I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

JACK. Well . . . may I propose to you now?

GWENDOLEN. I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

JACK. Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN. Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

JACK. You know what I have got to say to you.

GWENDOLEN. Yes, but you don't say it.

JACK. Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes on his knees*]

GWENDOLEN. Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

JACK. My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

GWENDOLEN. Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

[*Enter* LADY BRACKNELL]

LADY BRACKNELL. Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

GWENDOLEN. Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

LADY BRACKNELL. Finished what, may I ask?

GWENDOLEN. I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

[*They rise together*]

LADY BRACKNELL. Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to someone, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

GWENDOLEN [*reproachfully*]. Mamma!

LADY BRACKNELL. In the carriage, Gwendolen! [GWENDOLEN *goes to the door. She and* JACK *blow kisses to each other behind* LADY BRACKNELL'S *back.* LADY BRACKNELL *looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round*] Gwendolen, the carriage!

GWENDOLEN. Yes, mamma.

[*Goes out, looking back at* JACK]

LADY BRACKNELL [*sitting down*]. You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing.

[*Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil*]

JACK. Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY BRACKNELL [*pencil and note-book in hand*]. I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK. Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY BRACKNELL. I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There

are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK. Twenty-nine.

LADY BRACKNELL. A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK [*after some hesitation*]. I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL. I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

JACK. Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY BRACKNELL [*makes a note in her book*]. In land, or in investments?

JACK. In investments, chiefly.

LADY BRACKNELL. That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK. I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY BRACKNELL. A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK. Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY BRACKNELL. Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK. Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY BRACKNELL. Ah, now-a-days that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK. 149.

LADY BRACKNELL [*shaking her head*]. The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

JACK. Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY BRACKNELL [*sternly*]. Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK. Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

LADY BRACKNELL. Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

JACK. I have lost both my parents.

LADY BRACKNELL. Both? . . . That seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

JACK. I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

LADY BRACKNELL. Found!

JACK. The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY BRACKNELL. Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK [*gravely*]. In a hand-bag.

LADY BRACKNELL. A hand-bag?

JACK [*very seriously*]. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag — a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it — an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

LADY BRACKNELL. In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

JACK. In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

LADY BRACKNELL. The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

JACK. Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY BRACKNELL. The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion — has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now — but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognised position in good society.

JACK. May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY BRACKNELL. I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

JACK. Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL. Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter — a girl brought up with the utmost care — to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing!

[LADY BRACKNELL *sweeps out in majestic indignation*]

JACK. Good morning! [ALGERNON *from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March.* JACK *looks perfectly furious and goes to the door*] For goodness' sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are!

[*The music stops and* ALGERNON *enters cheerily*]

ALGERNON. Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

JACK. Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet. As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair. . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

ALGERNON. My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGERNON. It isn't!

JACK. Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

ALGERNON. That is exactly what things were originally made for.

JACK. Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself . . . [*A pause*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGERNON. All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

JACK. Is that clever?

ALGERNON. It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilised life should be.

JACK. I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever now-a-days. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

ALGERNON. We have.

JACK. I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

ALGERNON. The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

JACK. What fools!

ALGERNON. By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

JACK [*in a very patronising manner*] My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice,

sweet, refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

ALGERNON. The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGERNON. What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

JACK. Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

ALGERNON. Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

JACK. You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

ALGERNON. Of course it isn't!

JACK. Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

ALGERNON. But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

JACK. Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly, romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGERNON. I would rather like to see Cecily.

JACK. I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

ALGERNON. Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

JACK. Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

ALGERNON. Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

JACK [*irritably*]. Oh! it always is nearly seven.

ALGERNON. Well, I'm hungry.

JACK. I never knew you when you weren't. . . .

ALGERNON. What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theatre?

JACK. Oh, no! I loathe listening.

ALGERNON. Well, let us go to the Club?

JACK. Oh, no! I hate talking.

ALGERNON. Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

JACK. Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

ALGERNON. Well, what shall we do?

JACK. Nothing!

ALGERNON. It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.

[*Enter* LANE]

LANE. Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter* GWENDOLEN. LANE *goes out*]

ALGERNON. Gwendolen, upon my word!

GWENDOLEN. Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

ALGERNON. Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

GWENDOLEN. Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that.

[ALGERNON *retires to the fireplace*]

JACK. My own darling!

GWENDOLEN. Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents now-a-days pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

JACK. Dear Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN. The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibres of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me.

Your town address at the Albany, I have. What is your address in the country?

JACK. The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

[ALGERNON, *who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff. Then picks up the Railway Guide*]

GWENDOLEN. There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That, of course, will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

JACK. My own one!

GWENDOLEN. How long do you remain in town?

JACK. Till Monday.

GWENDOLEN. Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

ALGERNON. Thanks, I've turned round already.

GWENDOLEN. You may also ring the bell.

JACK. You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

GWENDOLEN. Certainly.

JACK. [*To* LANE, *who now enters*] I will see Miss Fairfax out.

LANE. Yes, sir.

[JACK *and* GWENDOLEN *go off.* LANE *presents several letters on a salver to* ALGERNON. *It is to be surmised that they are bills, as* ALGERNON, *after looking at the envelopes, tears them up*]

ALGERNON. A glass of sherry, Lane.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGERNON. To-morrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGERNON. I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket, and all the Bunbury suits . . .

LANE. Yes, sir. [*Handing sherry*]

ALGERNON. I hope to-morrow will be a fine day, Lane.

LANE. It never is, sir.

ALGERNON. Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

LANE. I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

[*Enter* JACK. LANE *goes off*]

JACK. There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life. [ALGERNON *is laughing immoderately*] What on earth are you so amused at?

ALGERNON. Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that is all.

JACK. If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

ALGERNON. I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

JACK. Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

ALGERNON. Nobody ever does.

[JACK *looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room,* ALGERNON *lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff and smiles*]

ACT-DROP

ACT II

SCENE. — *Garden at the Manor House. A flight of gray stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree.*

[MISS PRISM *discovered seated at the table.* CECILY *is at the back watering flowers*]

MISS PRISM [*calling*]. Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

CECILY [*coming over very slowly*]. But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

MISS PRISM. Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

CECILY. Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

MISS PRISM [*drawing herself up*]. Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is es-

pecially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

CECILY. I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

MISS PRISM. Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man, his brother.

CECILY. I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much.

[CECILY *begins to write in her diary*]

MISS PRISM [*shaking her head*]. I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that according to his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favour of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap. You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

CECILY. I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down I should probably forget all about them.

MISS PRISM. Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

CECILY. Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie sends us.

MISS PRISM. Do not speak slightingly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

CECILY. Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

MISS PRISM. The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

CECILY. I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

MISS PRISM. Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

CECILY [*smiling*]. But I see dear Dr. Chasuble coming up through the garden.

MISS PRISM [*rising and advancing*]. Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[*Enter* CANON CHASUBLE]

CHASUBLE. And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

CECILY. Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the Park, Dr. Chasuble.

MISS PRISM. Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

CECILY. No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

CHASUBLE. I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

CECILY. Oh, I am afraid I am.

CHASUBLE. That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [MISS PRISM *glares*] I spoke metaphorically. — My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

MISS PRISM. We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

CHASUBLE. Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man, his brother, seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

MISS PRISM. Egeria? My name is Lætitia, Doctor.

CHASUBLE [*bowing*]. A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong?

MISS PRISM. I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

CHASUBLE. With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

MISS PRISM. That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side.

[*Goes down the garden with* DR. CHASUBLE]

CECILY [*picks up books and throws them back on table*]. Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[*Enter* MERRIMAN *with a card on a salver*]

MERRIMAN. Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

CECILY [*takes the card and reads it*]. 'Mr Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany, W.' Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

MERRIMAN. Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

CECILY. Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

MERRIMAN. Yes, Miss.

[MERRIMAN *goes off*]

CECILY. I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else.

[*Enter* ALGERNON, *very gay and débonnaire*]

He does!

ALGERNON [*raising his hat*]. You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

CECILY. You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I believe I am more than usually tall for my age. [ALGERNON *is rather taken aback*] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

ALGERNON. Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

CECILY. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

ALGERNON [*looks at her in amazement*]. Oh! of course I have been rather reckless.

CECILY. I am glad to hear it.

ALGERNON. In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

CECILY. I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

ALGERNON. It is much pleasanter being here with you.

CECILY. I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

ALGERNON. That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss.

CECILY. Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

ALGERNON. No: the appointment is in London.

CECILY. Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

ALGERNON. About my what?

CECILY. Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

ALGERNON. I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

CECILY. I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

ALGERNON. Australia! I'd sooner die.

CECILY. Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

ALGERNON. Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

CECILY. Yes, but are you good enough for it?

ALGERNON. I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me

You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

CECILY. I'm afraid I've no time, this afternoon.

ALGERNON. Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

CECILY. It is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

ALGERNON. I will. I feel better already.

CECILY. You are looking a little worse.

ALGERNON. That is because I am hungry.

CECILY. How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

ALGERNON. Thank you. Might I have a button-hole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a button-hole first.

CECILY. A Maréchal Niel? [*Picks up scissors*]

ALGERNON. No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

CECILY. Why? [*Cuts a flower*]

ALGERNON. Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.

CECILY. I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

ALGERNON. Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. [CECILY *puts the rose in his button-hole*] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

CECILY. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

ALGERNON. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

CECILY. Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

[*They pass into the house.* MISS PRISM *and* DR. CHASUBLE *return*]

MISS PRISM. You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand — a womanthrope, never!

CHASUBLE [*with a scholar's shudder*]. Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

MISS PRISM [*sententiously*]. That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realise, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

CHASUBLE. But is a man not equally attractive when married?

MISS PRISM. No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

CHASUBLE. And often, I've been told, not even to her.

MISS PRISM. That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [DR. CHASUBLE *starts*] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

CHASUBLE. Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

[*Enter* JACK *slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crêpe hat-band and black gloves*]

MISS PRISM. Mr. Worthing!

CHASUBLE. Mr. Worthing?

MISS PRISM. This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK [*shakes* MISS PRISM'S *hand in a tragic manner*]. I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

CHASUBLE. Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK. My brother.

MISS PRISM. More shameful debts and extravagance?

CHASUBLE. Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK [*shaking his head*]. Dead!

CHASUBLE. Your brother Ernest dead?

JACK. Quite dead.

MISS PRISM. What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

CHASUBLE. Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

JACK. Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

CHASUBLE. Very sad, indeed. Were you with him at the end?

JACK. No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

CHASUBLE. Was the cause of death mentioned?

JACK. A severe chill, it seems.

MISS PRISM. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

CHASUBLE [*raising his hand*]. Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here?

JACK. No. He seemed to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

CHASUBLE. In Paris! [*Shakes his head*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [JACK *presses his hand convulsively*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [*All sigh*] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

JACK. Ah! that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [DR. CHASUBLE *looks astounded*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

MISS PRISM. It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

CHASUBLE. But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK. Oh, yes.

MISS PRISM [*bitterly*]. People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

JACK. But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

CHASUBLE. But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

JACK. I don't remember anything about it.

CHASUBLE. But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

JACK. I certainly intend to have. Of course, I don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

CHASUBLE. Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

JACK. Immersion!

CHASUBLE. You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

JACK. Oh, I might trot round about five if that would suit you?

CHASUBLE. Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hardworking man.

JACK. Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

CHASUBLE. Admirably! Admirably! [*Takes out watch*] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials are often blessings in disguise.

MISS PRISM. This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

[*Enter* CECILY *from the house*]

CECILY. Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have got on! Do go and change them.

MISS PRISM. Cecily!

CHASUBLE. My child! my child!

[CECILY *goes toward* JACK; *he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner*]

CECILY. What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had toothache, and I have got such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

JACK. Who?

CECILY. Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

JACK. What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

CECILY. Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack?

[*Runs back into the house*]

CHASUBLE. These are very joyful tidings.

MISS PRISM. After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

JACK. My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

[*Enter* ALGERNON *and* CECILY *hand in hand. They come slowly up to* JACK]

JACK. Good heavens!

[*Motions* ALGERNON *away*]

ALGERNON. Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future.

[JACK *glares at him and does not take his hand*]

CECILY. Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

JACK. Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

CECILY. Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend Mr. Bunbury, whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

JACK. Oh! he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

CECILY. Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

JACK. Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

ALGERNON. Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

CECILY. Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you.

JACK. Never forgive me?

CECILY. Never, never, never!

JACK. Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it.

[*Shakes hands with* ALGERNON *and glares*]

CHASUBLE. It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

MISS PRISM. Cecily, you will come with us.

CECILY. Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

CHASUBLE. You have done a beautiful action to-day, dear child.

MISS PRISM. We must not be premature in our judgments.

CECILY. I feel very happy.

[*They all go off*]

JACK. You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN]

MERRIMAN. I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

JACK. What?

MERRIMAN. Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

JACK. His luggage?

MERRIMAN. Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

ALGERNON. I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

JACK. Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

MERRIMAN. Yes, sir.

[*Goes back into the house*]

ALGERNON. What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

JACK. Yes, you have.

ALGERNON. I haven't heard anyone call me.

JACK. Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

ALGERNON. My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

JACK. I can quite understand that.

ALGERNON. Well, Cecily is a darling.

JACK. You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

ALGERNON. Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

JACK. You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

ALGERNON. I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

JACK. Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

ALGERNON. Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

JACK. Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

ALGERNON. If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated.

JACK. Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you.

[*Goes into the house*]

ALGERNON. I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything. [*Enter* CECILY *at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers*] But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

CECILY. Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

ALGERNON. He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

CECILY. Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

ALGERNON. He's going to send me away.

CECILY. Then have we got to part?

ALGERNON. I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

CECILY. It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

ALGERNON. Thank you.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN]

MERRIMAN. The dog-cart is at the door, sir.

[ALGERNON *looks appealingly at* CECILY]

CECILY. It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

MERRIMAN. Yes, Miss.

[*Exit* MERRIMAN]

ALGERNON. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

CECILY. I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me I will copy your remarks into my diary.

[*Goes over to table and begins writing in diary*]

ALGERNON. Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

CECILY. Oh, no. [*Puts her hand over it*] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached 'absolute perfection.' You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

ALGERNON [*somewhat taken aback*]. Ahem! Ahem!

CECILY. Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough.

[*Writes as* ALGERNON *speaks*]

ALGERNON [*speaking very rapidly*]. Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

CECILY. I don't think that you should tell me that you love wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

ALGERNON. Cecily!

[*Enter* MERRIMAN]

MERRIMAN. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

ALGERNON. Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

MERRIMAN [*looks at* CECILY, *who makes no sign*] Yes, sir.

[MERRIMAN *retires*]

CECILY. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

ALGERNON. Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

CECILY. You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGERNON. For the last three months?

CECILY. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGERNON. But how did we become engaged?

CECILY. Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

ALGERNON. Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECILY. On the 4th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lover's knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGERNON. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECILY. Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters.

[*Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon*]

ALGERNON. My letters! But my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

CECILY. You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

ALGERNON. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

CECILY. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces box*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

ALGERNON. But was our engagement ever broken off?

CECILY. Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary*] 'To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming.'

ALGERNON. But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

CECILY. It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

ALGERNON [*crossing to her, and kneeling*]. What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

CECILY. You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

ALGERNON. Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

CECILY. I am so glad.

ALGERNON. You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

CECILY. I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

ALGERNON. Yes, of course.

[*Nervously*]

CECILY. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Ernest. [ALGERNON *rises*, CECILY *also*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married

woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

ALGERNON. But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

CECILY. But what name?

ALGERNON. Oh, any name you like — Algernon — for instance . . .

CECILY. But I don't like the name of Algernon.

ALGERNON. Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily . . . [*Moving to her*] . . . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

CECILY [*rising*]. I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

ALGERNON. Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up hat*] Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the Church?

CECILY. Oh, yes. Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

ALGERNON. I must see him at once on a most important christening — I mean on most important business.

CECILY. Oh!

ALGERNON. I sha'n't be away more than half an hour.

CECILY. Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you to-day for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

ALGERNON. I'll be back in no time.

[*Kisses her and rushes down the garden*]

CECILY. What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN]

MERRIMAN. A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business Miss Fairfax states.

CECILY. Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

MERRIMAN. Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECILY. Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

MERRIMAN. Yes, Miss. [*Goes out*]

CECILY. Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN]

MERRIMAN. Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter* GWENDOLEN]

[*Exit* MERRIMAN]

CECILY [*advancing to meet her*]. Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

GWENDOLEN. Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to her and shaking hands*] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

CECILY. How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

GWENDOLEN [*still standing up*]. I may call you Cecily, may I not?

CECILY. With pleasure!

GWENDOLEN. And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

CECILY. If you wish.

GWENDOLEN. Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

CECILY. I hope so.

[*A pause. They both sit down together*]

GWENDOLEN. Perhaps this might be a favourable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

CECILY. I don't think so.

GWENDOLEN. Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men

so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECILY. Oh! not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

GWENDOLEN [*after examining* CECILY *carefully through a lorgnette*]. You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

CECILY. Oh no! I live here.

GWENDOLEN [*severely*]. Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

CECILY. Oh no! I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

GWENDOLEN. Indeed!

CECILY. My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

GWENDOLEN. Your guardian?

CECILY. Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

GWENDOLEN. Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her*] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you! But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were — well just a little older than you seem to be — and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly —

CECILY. Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

GWENDOLEN. Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

CECILY. I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

GWENDOLEN. Yes.

CECILY. Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother — his elder brother.

GWENDOLEN [*sitting down again*]. Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

CECILY. I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

GWENDOLEN. Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

CECILY. Quite sure. [*A pause*] In fact, I am going to be his.

GWENDOLEN [*enquiringly*]. I beg your pardon?

CECILY [*rather shy and confidingly*]. Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWENDOLEN [*quite politely, rising*]. My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the 'Morning Post' on Saturday at the latest.

CECILY [*very politely, rising*]. I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary*]

GWENDOLEN [*examines diary through her lorgnette carefully*]. It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5.30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid *I* have the prior claim.

CECILY. It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out

that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWENDOLEN [*meditatively*]. If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise, I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

CECILY [*thoughtfully and sadly*]. Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWENDOLEN. Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECILY. Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

GWENDOLEN [*satirically*]. I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN, *followed by the footman. He carries a salver, table cloth, and plate stand.* CECILY *is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe*]

MERRIMAN. Shall I lay tea here as usual, Miss?

CECILY [*sternly, in a calm voice*]. Yes, as usual.

[MERRIMAN *begins to clear and lay cloth. A long pause.* CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *glare at each other*]

GWENDOLEN. Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

CECILY. Oh! yes! a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

GWENDOLEN. Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

CECILY [*sweetly*]. I suppose that is why you live in town?

[GWENDOLEN *bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol*]

GWENDOLEN [*looking around*]. Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

CECILY. So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN. I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

CECILY. Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

GWENDOLEN. Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

CECILY. Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN [*with elaborate politeness*]. Thank you. [*Aside*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

CECILY [*sweetly*]. Sugar?

GWENDOLEN [*superciliously*]. No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more.

[CECILY *looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup*]

CECILY [*severely*]. Cake or bread and butter?

GWENDOLEN [*in a bored manner*]. Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses now-a-days.

CECILY [*cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray*]. Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[MERRIMAN *does so, and goes out with footman.* GWENDOLEN *drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation*]

GWENDOLEN. You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

CECILY [*rising*]. To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

GWENDOLEN. From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

CECILY. It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighbourhood.

[*Enter* JACK]

GWENDOLEN [*catching sight of him*]. Ernest! My own Ernest!

JACK. Gwendolen! Darling! [*Offers to kiss her*]

GWENDOLEN [*drawing back*]. A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [*Points to* CECILY]

JACK [*laughing*]. To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

GWENDOLEN. Thank you. You may. [*Offers her cheek*]

CECILY [*very sweetly*]. I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my dear guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

GWENDOLEN. I beg your pardon?

CECILY. This is Uncle Jack.

GWENDOLEN [*receding*]. Jack! Oh!

[*Enter* ALGERNON]

CECILY. Here is Ernest.

ALGERNON [*goes straight over to* CECILY *without noticing anyone else*]. My own love! [*Offers to kiss her*]

CECILY [*drawing back*]. A moment, Ernest! May I ask you — are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

ALGERNON [*looking around*]. To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

CECILY. Yes! to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

ALGERNON [*laughing*]. Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

CECILY. Thank you. [*Presenting her cheek to be kissed*] You may. [ALGERNON *kisses her*]

GWENDOLEN. I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

CECILY [*breaking away from* ALGERNON]. Algernon Moncrieff! Oh!

[*The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waist as if for protection*]

CECILY. Are you called Algernon?

ALGERNON. I cannot deny it.

CECILY. Oh!

GWENDOLEN. Is your name really John?

JACK [*standing rather proudly*]. I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

CECILY. [*To* GWENDOLEN] A gross deception has been practised on both of us.

GWENDOLEN. My poor wounded Cecily!

CECILY. My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN [*slowly and seriously*]. You will call me sister, will you not?

[*They embrace.* JACK *and* ALGERNON *groan and walk up and down*]

CECILY [*rather brightly*]. There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

GWENDOLEN. An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

JACK [*slowly and hesitatingly*]. Gwendolen — Cecily — it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However, I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

CECILY [*surprised*]. No brother at all?

JACK [*cheerily*]. None!

GWENDOLEN [*severely*]. Had you never a brother of any kind?

JACK [*pleasantly*]. Never. Not even of any kind.

GWENDOLEN. I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

CECILY. It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

GWENDOLEN. Let us go into the

house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

CECILY. No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[*They retire into the house with scornful looks*]

JACK. This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

ALGERNON. Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

JACK. Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

ALGERNON. That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

JACK. Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

ALGERNON. Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

JACK. Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too.

ALGERNON. Your brother is a little off colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing either.

JACK. As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

ALGERNON. I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

JACK. I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

ALGERNON. Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

JACK. There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

ALGERNON. I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

JACK. Well, that is no business of yours.

ALGERNON. If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins*] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stock-brokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

JACK. How you can sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGERNON. Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK. I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGERNON. When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as any one who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [*Rising*]

JACK [*rising*]. Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way.

[*Takes muffins from* ALGERNON]

ALGERNON [*offering tea-cake*]. I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

JACK. Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGERNON. But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK. I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGERNON. That may be. But the muffins are the same.

[*He seizes the muffin-dish from* JACK]

JACK. Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

ALGERNON. You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

JACK. My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better.

I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5.30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

ALGERNON. Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

JACK. Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

ALGERNON. Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

JACK. Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

ALGERNON. It usen't to be, I know — but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

JACK [*picking up the muffin-dish*]. Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

ALGERNON. Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [*Takes them*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

JACK. But I hate tea-cake.

ALGERNON. Why on earth then do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

JACK. Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go?

ALGERNON. I haven't quite finished my tea yet! and there is still one muffin left.

[JACK *groans and sinks into a chair.* ALGERNON *still continues eating*]

ACT-DROP

ACT III

SCENE. — *Morning-room at the Manor House.*

[GWENDOLEN *and* CECILY *are at the window, looking out into the garden*]

GWENDOLEN. The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

CECILY. They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

GWENDOLEN [*after a pause*]. They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

CECILY. But I haven't a cough.

GWENDOLEN. They're looking at us. What effrontery!

CECILY. They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

GWENDOLEN. Let us preserve a dignified silence.

CECILY. Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

[*Enter* JACK, *followed by* ALGERNON. *They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British opcra*]

GWENDOLEN. This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

CECILY. A most distasteful one.

GWENDOLEN. But we will not be the first to speak.

CECILY. Certainly not.

GWENDOLEN. Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

CECILY. Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question: Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

ALGERNON. In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

CECILY. [*To* GWENDOLEN] That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

GWENDOLEN. Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

CECILY. I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

GWENDOLEN. True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was

it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

JACK. Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN. I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German scepticism. [*Moving to* CECILY] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

CECILY. I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

GWENDOLEN. Then you think we should forgive them?

CECILY. Yes. I mean no.

GWENDOLEN. True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

CECILY. Could we not both speak at the same time?

GWENDOLEN. An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

CECILY. Certainly.

[GWENDOLEN *beats time with uplifted finger*]

GWENDOLEN AND CECILY [*speaking together*]. Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier! That is all!

JACK AND ALGERNON [*speaking together*]. Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

GWENDOLEN. [*To* JACK] For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

JACK. I am.

CECILY. [*To* ALGERNON] To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

ALGERNON. I am!

GWENDOLEN. How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned men are infinitely beyond us.

JACK. We are.

[*Clasps hands with* ALGERNON]

CECILY. They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

GWENDOLEN. [*To* JACK] Darling!

ALGERNON. [*To* CECILY] Darling!

[*They fall into each other's arms*]

[*Enter* MERRIMAN. *When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation*]

MERRIMAN. Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

JACK. Good heavens!

[*Enter* LADY BRACKNELL. *The couples separate in alarm. Exit* MERRIMAN]

LADY BRACKNELL. Gwendolen! What does this mean?

GWENDOLEN. Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

LADY BRACKNELL. Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*Turns to* JACK] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train. Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to undeceive him. Indeed I have never undeceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

JACK. I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

LADY BRACKNELL. You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

ALGERNON. Yes, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

ALGERNON [*stammering*]. Oh! No! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

LADY BRACKNELL. Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

ALGERNON [*airily*]. Oh! I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL. What did he die of?

ALGERNON. Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

LADY BRACKNELL. Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

ALGERNON. My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean — so Bunbury died.

LADY BRACKNELL. He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury, may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

JACK. That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward.

[LADY BRACKNELL *bows coldly to* CECILY]

ALGERNON. I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. I beg your pardon?

CECILY. Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL [*with a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down*]. I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary enquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus.

[JACK *looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself*]

JACK [*in a clear, cold voice*]. Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporran, Fifeshire, N.B.

LADY BRACKNELL. That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

JACK. I have carefully preserved the Court Guides of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL [*grimly*]. I have known strange errors in that publication.

JACK. Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

LADY BRACKNELL. Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markbys is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

JACK [*very irritably*]. How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and the English variety.

LADY BRACKNELL. Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favour of premature experiences. [*Rises, looks at her watch*] Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

JACK. Oh! about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. That is all. Good-bye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

LADY BRACKNELL [*sitting down again*]. A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To* CECILY] Come over here, dear. [CECILY *goes across*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young

Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

JACK. [*Aside*] And after six months nobody knew her.

LADY BRACKNELL [*glares at* JACK *for a few moments. Then bends, with a practised smile, to* CECILY]. Kindly turn round, sweet child. [CECILY *turns completely round*] No, the side view is what I want. [CECILY *presents her profile*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

ALGERNON. Yes, Aunt Augusta!

LADY BRACKNELL. There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

ALGERNON. Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

LADY BRACKNELL. Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To* CECILY] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

ALGERNON. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. Cecily, you may kiss me!

CECILY [*kisses her*]. Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL. You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

CECILY. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

ALGERNON. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

CECILY. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

JACK. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

LADY BRACKNELL. Upon what grounds, may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

JACK. It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful.

[ALGERNON *and* CECILY *look at him in indignant amazement*]

LADY BRACKNELL. Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

JACK. I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon, during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89; a wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

JACK. That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

LADY BRACKNELL. [*To* CECILY] Come here, sweet child. [CECILY *goes over*] How old are you, dear?

CECILY. Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

LADY BRACKNELL. You are per-

fectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [*In a meditative manner*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

JACK. Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

LADY BRACKNELL. That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

CECILY. Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

ALGERNON. Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

CECILY. Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

ALGERNON. Then what is to be done, Cecily?

CECILY. I don't know, Mr. Moncrieff.

LADY BRACKNELL. My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five — a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature — I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

JACK. But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

LADY BRACKNELL [*rising and drawing herself up*]. You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

JACK. Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

LADY BRACKNELL. That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*Pulls out her watch*] Come dear; [GWENDOLEN *rises*] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[*Enter* DR. CHASUBLE]

CHASUBLE. Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

LADY BRACKNELL. The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

CHASUBLE [*looking rather puzzled, and pointing to* JACK *and* ALGERNON]. Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

LADY BRACKNELL. At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptised. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

CHASUBLE. Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

JACK. I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

CHASUBLE. I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

LADY BRACKNELL [*starting*]. Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

CHASUBLE. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

LADY BRACKNELL. Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of

repellant aspect, remotely connected with education?

CHASUBLE [*somewhat indignantly*]. She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

LADY BRACKNELL. It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

CHASUBLE [*severely*]. I am a celibate, madam.

JACK [*interposing*]. Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

LADY BRACKNELL. In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

CHASUBLE [*looking off*]. She approaches; she is nigh.

[*Enter* MISS PRISM *hurriedly*]

MISS PRISM. I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters.

[*Catches sight of* LADY BRACKNELL, *who has fixed her with a stony glare.* MISS PRISM *grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape*]

LADY BRACKNELL [*in a severe, judicial voice*]. Prism! [MISS PRISM *bows her head in shame*] Come here, Prism! [MISS PRISM *approaches in a humble manner*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*General consternation. The Canon starts back in horror.* ALGERNON *and* JACK *pretend to be anxious to shield* CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal*] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [MISS PRISM *starts in involuntary indignation*] But the baby was not there! [*Everyone looks at* MISS PRISM] Prism; where is that baby? [*A pause*]

MISS PRISM. Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is for ever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious hand-bag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

JACK [*who has been listening attentively*]. But where did you deposit the hand-bag?

MISS PRISM. Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

JACK. Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

MISS PRISM. I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

JACK. What railway station?

MISS PRISM [*quite crushed*]. Victoria. The Brighton line. [*Sinks into a chair*]

JACK. I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

GWENDOLEN. If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*Exit* JACK *in great excitement*]

CHASUBLE. What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

LADY BRACKNELL. I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing.

[*Noises heard overheard as if someone was throwing trunks about. Everyone looks up*]

CECILY. Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

CHASUBLE. Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

LADY BRACKNELL. This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

CHASUBLE [*looking up*]. It has stopped now. [*The noise is redoubled*]

LADY BRACKNELL. I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

GWENDOLEN. This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last.

[*Enter* JACK *with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand*]

JACK [*rushing over to* MISS PRISM]. Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

MISS PRISM [*calmly*]. It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

JACK [*in a pathetic voice*]. Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this hand-bag. I was the baby you placed in it.

MISS PRISM [*amazed*]. You?

JACK [*embracing her*]. Yes . . . mother!

MISS PRISM [*recoiling in indignant astonishment*]. Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

JACK. Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men, and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*Tries to embrace her again*]

MISS PRISM [*still more indignant*]. Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing to* LADY BRACKNELL] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

JACK [*after a pause*]. Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

LADY BRACKNELL. I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

JACK. Algy's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily, — how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*Seizes hold of* ALGERNON] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

ALGERNON. Well, not till to-day, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice. [*Shakes hands*]

GWENDOLEN. [*To* JACK] My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

JACK. Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

GWENDOLEN. I never change, except in my affections.

CECILY. What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

JACK. Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, had I been christened already?

LADY BRACKNELL. Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

JACK. Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

LADY BRACKNELL. Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

JACK [*irritably*]. Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

LADY BRACKNELL [*meditatively*]. I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit. But only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

JACK. Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

ALGERNON. My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

JACK. His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

LADY BRACKNELL. The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt

his name would appear in any military directory.

JACK. The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [*Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out*] M. Generals. . . . Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley, what ghastly names they have — Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [*Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

LADY BRACKNELL. Yes, I remember that the General was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

GWENDOLEN. Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

JACK. Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

GWENDOLEN. I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

JACK. My own one!

CHASUBLE. [*To* MISS PRISM]. Lætitia! [*Embraces her*]

MISS PRISM [*enthusiastically*]. Frederick! At last!

ALGERNON. Cecily! [*Embraces her*] At last!

JACK. Gwendolen! [*Embraces her*] At last!

LADY BRACKNELL. My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

JACK. On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realised for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.

TABLEAU

CURTAIN

THE GAY LORD QUEX

(1899)

By Arthur Wing Pinero

ARTHUR WING PINERO

How curious it is to re-read Pinero in the full light of Ibsen, Shaw, and Galsworthy. Manners and customs and morals change, but human nature remains constant. It is because Pinero, in the past, leaned so lightly upon manners and customs and morals of the '80's and '90's, and leaned upon nothing else, that now, in 1918, after twenty-five years, he does not seem to have added as much to the renaissance of the British stage as one has been led to expect by the numberless substantial and interesting successes he has had.

There are two supreme characteristics about Pinero which still make us accept him as a leading figure in the British drama — one is his unfailing ability to interest an audience in his story; and the other is the never-failing perfectness of his technique, which often surmounts any weakness of intellectual reasoning or psychological analysis his plays might have. After twenty-five years, we come to regard Pinero in historical perspective. We are able, with justice, to claim that while he did much to revive the fast declining drama of England in the '80's, he was a follower rather than a leader. In this respect his claim to permanence in the history of modern British drama is not as secure, nor as justly important, as that of Henry Arthur Jones. He far exceeds the latter in his originality of invention, in his variety of character, in his exuberance of form. Like Jones, Pinero has consciously defied the sedateness of Mrs. Grundy, only in the end to make concessions to public sensitiveness. But by inheritance, Jones, a farmer's son, aimed his shafts at a society to which he could lay no claim, except as an observant outsider, whereas Pinero, sprung from an Anglo-Portuguese stock of social position, levelled his satire at a circle on which he had some inside hold.

On re-examining the early plays of Pinero and the early plays of Jones, it is not too much to say, after twenty-five years, that the conscience of the farmer's son was always stronger and more sensitive than the conscience of the London solicitor's son. It is because of that, it is because Jones, in his preface to "Saints and Sinners" (1881), and in his interesting book on "The Renascence of the English Drama", showed that what the British stage of his early day most needed was an unhampered outlook upon life, where life was greater than society, that he is entitled to a place above that of Pinero.

Had Arthur Wing Pinero not been a dramatist, he would have been a very excellent novelist; not a story-teller of the Meredith type, nor of the Hardy type, even though critics at one time accused him of depending upon Hardy's "Far from the Madding Crowd" in the writing of his comedy, "The Squire", given at the St. James's Theatre, in December, 1881. In the same way that Pinero has never been able quite to overcome his inheritance from Tom Robertson — an inheritance which he has never wanted to repudiate — so would he never have been able, had he been a novelist, to shake off his debt to Charles Dickens. This

influence can be seen in his plays. He has the same method of character portrayal — a character portrayal which attaches itself to a trick of phrase, as an identifying mark; such a trick, for example, as *Frayne's* exclamation that everything is "alluring", in "The Gay Lord Quex" (1899), or *Sir William's* reiterant exclamation, "Have we no cheers!" in "Trelawny of the 'Wells'" (1898). Put such tricks by the side of *Uriah Heep*, with his clammy hands and his humble grin, of *Newman Noggs*, and his cracking finger joints, of *Micawber*, with his "something turning up", of *Mantalini*, with his "Dem it! Bless its little heart!" Were it not for the fact that Pinero is supreme as a technical artist, these little theatrical tricks of his would, from the very beginning, have been monotonous and often irritating. For he has always been inclined to shape his play, even to force its shape, for its legitimate theatrical climax, rather than to measure and weigh every logical step in his position.

It is only after twenty-five years, when one has read, in rapid succession, the numerous published plays by Pinero, that one discovers his repetition of situation and idea, and his very slight variation of character. The inference is forced upon us that Pinero's art is a dominantly "clever" one, where he can claim the interest of an audience in "The Profligate" (1889), and then, a few years after, hold that same interest with a similar motive in "The Gay Lord Quex" (1899); where he can arouse sympathy through a drama like "Iris" (1901), and play reminiscent themes of the same moral tone in "Mid-Channel" (1909). Even "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" (1893) suggests certain similarities with "His House in Order" (1906), which A. B. Walkley very interestingly declares should have been called "The Second Mrs. Jesson." Like the novelist also, Pinero becomes interested in his people to such an extent that he develops the type to greater proportions, as when *Agatha* in "The Magistrate" (1885) becomes *Georgina Tidman* in "Dandy Dick" (1887); or he uses the same character over again, the *Lady Egidia Drumdurris*, in "The Cabinet Minister" (1890), appearing in "The Amazons" (1893), in the course of *Lady Castlejordan's* conversation.

This power of giving his plays new cuts from old material has always characterized Pinero. Even in the days of his Court Farces, when "The Magistrate" (1885), "The School-Mistress" (1886), and "Dandy Dick" (1887) helped to establish his career, it was his exuberance of dialogue, his easy skill in light character-sketching, that enriched the slight framework of his invention. For, in those early days, Pinero was not able to disguise the clever manipulation of his technique. He applied the methods of the "well-made play", of the artificial comedy, to a theory of farce which has thus been described by one of his critics:

> He claims for it a wider scope and more comprehensive purpose than have ever been associated with farce of the old Adelphi type, or the modern genus of the Palais Royal. He has openly expressed his opinion that farce must gradually become the modern equivalent of comedy, since the present being an age of sentiment rather than of manners, the comic playwright must of necessity seek his humour in the exaggeration of sentiment.

After twenty-five years, however, the only claim that such plays as "The Hobby Horse" (1886), "The Cabinet Minister" (1890), "The Times" (1891), and "The Amazons" (1893), might have upon our attention would be their vivacity rather than their permanence of comedy character or situation. They are many degrees

superior to the artificiality of Boucicault's "London Assurance" (1841). They are in no way of the perennial class with Sheridan's "The School for Scandal" (1777). Not only that, but it might readily be claimed that Pinero, in his handling of the lighter forms of comedy, has never approached the excellence of Henry Arthur Jones, in his play of High Comedy manners, "Mary Goes First" (1913).

In English drama, Pinero has figured since 1877. He came at a time when the British stage was at its lowest ebb, when there had been no tremendous reaction in the wake of Tom Robertson's insistence on a certain type of reality for the theatre. Of Portuguese-Jewish extraction — his family originally spelled their name Pin-heiro — he was born in London, on the old Kent Road, May 24, 1854. Well-grounded in a common-school education, he was persuaded by his father to read law with him in Lincoln's Fields. This legal training, even though it was not called into service as a livelihood, was a good education for a dramatist of his type. His love for the theatre becoming dominant, he joined a company headed by Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Wyndham, Edinburgh managers, and was given by them small parts and a smaller salary. He played in Wilkie Collins's "Miss Gwilt", produced in London in 1876, and for five years was with Sir Henry Irving, assuming such parts as *Guildenstern* or the *King* in "Hamlet", and *Salarino* in "The Merchant of Venice."

In October, 1877, he wrote a small piece entitled "Two Hundred a Year", followed by a number of curtain-raisers, which Irving produced and in which Irving appeared. The casts of some of his early dramas show the names of R. C. Carton, Henry V. Esmond, and Myra Holme, who afterwards became Lady Pinero. It was in November, 1880, that he definitely launched his career as a dramatist, with a play entitled "The Money Spinner."

We mention this play because it brought Pinero into association with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and John Hare, and was the beginning of that long series of special casts which marked most of the Pinero productions, and which undoubtedly influenced him in the selection of his *dramatis personæ* while writing.

In the first volume of the definitive edition of Pinero's play, edited by Mr. Clayton Hamilton, "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" (1893) and "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" (1895) challenge reconsideration. It is a reconsideration in the light of Ibsen, and after our social conscience has been awakened through the Fabian ideas of Bernard Shaw and the ironical methods of Galsworthy. Our psychology has grown more acute in the last twenty-five years, and this will undoubtedly affect our re-reading of Pinero's serious plays.

It might be said that when "The Profligate" was presented, in 1889, Pinero began to get his stride. But with the perversity which has always marked his development, he could never be relied upon to take the same length of step each time, having always turned, at will, from farce to sentiment, from sentiment to satire, from tragedy to comedy. Yet undoubtedly, "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" and "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" mark a well-defined period in the development of Pinero. They represent the effect Ibsen had upon him, an effect produced in the English playwright after he had witnessed the first London production of "Ghosts", at J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre, on March 13, 1891.

In the application of the word "social" to Pinero, critics approach the very weakest side of his talent as a playwright, and of his claim to position in the British drama as a thinker. In his introduction to one of his first printed plays, "The

Times" (1892), he shows a reflection of attitude, a reaction of response toward the Ibsen philosophy, when he writes:

> At this particular moment in the struggling existence of our drama, a playwright ought perhaps to offer an apology for a work which, he entreats, may be considered unpretentious. Yet, even at a time when the bent of the dramatic taste is, we are assured, deliberately severe, there may be some to whom the spectacle of the mimic castigation of the lighter faults of humanity may prove entertaining — nay, more, to certain simple minds, instructive. There may be still those who consider that the follies, even the vices, of the age may be chastised as effectually by a sounding blow from the hollow bladder of the jester as by the fierce application of the knout; that a moral need not invariably be enforced with the sententiousness of the sermon or the assertiveness of the tract.

This, seemingly, is Pinero's criticism of the early "bold" Mr. Jones and the slightly later "daring" Mr. Shaw. In view of our having lived since the '80's through a period of keenly critical social philosophy, it does not seem that Pinero has changed much in the case he holds against the thesis drama. It is not reticence of character that has made him so loath to go deep in his criticism of English society. It is a fault of character which indicates in him the absence of social sympathy. The inability of Pinero to shift his social vision is, therefore, one of his shortcomings, and he finds himself in these present days as specifically dated in the history of British drama as though he were no longer creating.

Yet it is because of his retention of that creative faculty to an almost even height, that a play by Arthur Wing Pinero, in these days, twenty-five years after "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" and "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith", raises expectancy and speculation. As an important craftsman he has, since the appearance of these two dramas, advanced far and matured unerringly. "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" and "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" read well. Their dialogue has literary character to it. Their psychology is still theatrically interesting. Yet, put by the side of *Paula Tanqueray* the figure of *Hedda Gabler* (1890), and by the side of *Agnes Ebbsmith* the figure of *Rebecca West* (1886), and say — Look upon Pinero, and then on Ibsen. Even the unerring surface photographs of *Lord Dangars*, in "The Profligate", the *Duke of St. Olpherts*, in "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith", and the gay *Lord Quex*, invite comparison with *Doctor Rank* in "A Doll's House." Mr. Hamilton refers to Pinero as being a forward-looking dramatist; nevertheless he claims that when he discussed "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" with Pinero, the latter told him much about the early life of *Agnes*, and about her inheritance from her father and her mother. None of this antecedent influence is overpoweringly impressed upon us in the text of the play, as *Nora's* antecedents are made vital in "A Doll's House." Bernard Shaw had a right to sneer at the social philosophy of Pinero, who tried to make his heroine a Hyde Park free-speech woman, and sought to impress us with her modern fearlessness. Pinero was entirely too forward-looking in the writing of this play, because he undoubtedly shaped everything to culminate in *Agnes's* Bible-burning scene — a scene, again, which, in its organic character, offers contrast with *Hedda Gabler's* burning of *Eilert Lövborg's* manuscript; not that these two scenes are comparable in their

motives, but in their technical placing as inherent parts of the drama they do form a most significant technical contrast.

After twenty-five years, the interest in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" is still strong. In the reading of all Pinero's plays, however, to the time of "His House in Order", we detect that great failing of his — the inability to write dialogue which fully accords with the character destined to speak it; he is still old-fashioned in that he is inclined to be a little bombastic in his speech, a little platitudinous in sentiment, and often given to the "aside." As Walkley so acutely suggests, Pinero is devoid of any fastidious feeling for realism in language.

Yet, considering historically the time in which "Tanqueray" and "Ebbsmith" were written, we cannot but feel that they are mile-posts of a most significant order in the history of the modern British drama. Pinero's technique has advanced beyond them. No one will gainsay the fact that, in point of artistry, "His House in Order" (1906), "The Thunderbolt" (1908), "Mid-Channel" (1909), "The 'Mind the Paint' Girl" (1912), are far better in their literary character than "The Benefit of the Doubt" (1895), "The Princess and the Butterfly" (1897), and "Iris" (1901). Yet, these latter plays have lost none of their fascination as expert pieces of dramaturgy, and as interesting examples of the story-teller's art. Who could gainsay the pictorial charm of "Trelawny of the 'Wells'", with its character portrait of Tom Robertson's *alias Tom Wrench?*

Pinero is not interested in the individual, except as a god in the machine which he is creating. And he creates it so perfectly, so exactly, that he finds himself in turn governed by the machine; that is why Mr. Hamilton is right in calling Pinero the playwright's playwright, in the same sense that for all time Spenser will be known as the poet's poet. As Pinero has grown older, he has not relinquished any of the "tricks" which were practised by him in earlier years. *Cayle Drummle*, in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray", is a foreshadowing of the *Hon. Peter Mottram* in "Mid-Channel." The Bible-burning scene in "Ebbsmith" suggests a method later used in "Iris", when *Maldinado* upsets the furniture. The only period that Pinero seems to have outgrown is his "Sweet Lavender" (1888) years, a characteristic mood which flowered and matured in "The Princess and the Butterfly", and seems, more or less, to have died out.

As a dramatist of the serious, Pinero becomes a student of the individual, of the special, rather than of the type. It may be that had Ibsen been born in London, his *Nora* (1881), his *Hedda*, his *Ellida* (1888), and his *Hilda* might have been subjected to an environment which would have left them less intellectually diseased. They would also have had less brains. They would have been more apt to be moved by English circumstances, as in the case of *Iris*, than by the universal laws of heredity, as in the case of *Nora*.

In "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" and in "The Profligate", the woman and the man are subjected to the fate of their past sins, but these sins are marked by circumstance, not by heredity. *Lechmere*, in "Letty" (1903), for example, when carried to the verge, cries out that he is a victim of past generations. But Pinero fails, in any of his plays, to have character disturbed by an active past. Even in "His House in Order", the first *Mrs. Jesson* is not as vitally present as is *Mrs. Rosmer* in "Rosmersholm." It may be that this is the difference between what we call Ibsen realism and Pinero seriousness. "Iris" is not a study of sin; it is a study of innate weakness of character, subject to time and place. In other words, Pinero's characters either conquer or are conquered by circumstance.

The technique of a dramatist who has attained such perfect execution invites close study. Throughout his career, Pinero has been reticent regarding the analysis of himself; much more reticent than Henry Arthur Jones, who has written many books which might be quoted in criticism against himself. Of his dramatic theory, Pinero does not often write. His famous lecture on Stevenson, issued in brochure by the Dramatic Museum of Columbia University, is the only guide we have to what he considers playwriting to be. During the course of this lecture he asks:

> What is dramatic talent? Is it not the power to project characters, and to cause them to tell an interesting story through the medium of dialogue? This is *dramatic* talent; and dramatic talent, if I may so express it, is the raw material of theatrical talent. Dramatic, like poetic, talent is born, not made; if it is to achieve success on the stage it must be developed into theatrical talent by hard study, and generally by long practice. For theatrical talent consists in the power of making your characters not only tell a story by means of dialogue, but tell it in such skilfully-devised form and order as shall, within the limits of an ordinary theatrical representation, give rise to the greatest possible amount of that peculiar kind of emotional effect, the production of which is the one great function of the theatre.

That Pinero possesses a dominant theatrical talent is not to be denied. He has learned his technique through a long life of association in the theatre. And, as one critic said, his position would have been higher "if he could but forget to show off his technical skill by bedeviling . . . his main theme with a glittering congeries of inessential things." He has made actors, and actors have made him. In this respect his counterpart in American drama is Clyde Fitch. His career is intimately associated with the development of John Hare; *Quex*, *Heron*, in "Lady Bountiful" (1891), *Dangars*, in "The Profligate", the *Duke of St. Olpherts* in "Ebbsmith", were as assuredly shaped for the talents of Hare as was *Mrs. Ebbsmith* for the peculiar style of Mrs. Patrick Campbell, after her first success in "Tanqueray."

Perhaps no British dramatist is personally so little known to the public as Pinero. His name is attached to many documents of public interest, probably because, being a Dean among members of the new school, it is the proper thing for him to do. His plays have appeared with regularity, and each has been received on its own merit; and no dramatist of his generation — unless it be Jones — has challenged so much enthusiastic support and so much contrary criticism. He is an experimenter, not only in stage technique, but in showing how far technique can be applied to the governing of character. His "Iris" was unjustifiably brutal in its solution, his interest being to see how far down in the scale of life he could drag a woman when the machinery of his invention showed that, at any moment, he could have saved her if he had so wished.

It seems strange that a quarter of a century back any manager should have hesitated to give Pinero's "social" dramas. Both George Alexander and Daniel Frohman hesitated when brought face to face with "Tanqueray."

We are told that Pinero's stories come to him first, that the characters arise out of the plot he has selected. One writer has declared that "Pinero must see his scenes. He went and had a good look at the Albany before placing there the

chambers of *Aubrey Tanqueray.* For the later scenes he visited Haslemere which he called Willowmere, and *Mrs. Cortleyon's* house was one which he had actually been in as the guest of Mrs. Humphry Ward."

Being a man of the theatre he leaves nothing to the haphazard choice of his players. He draws his ground-plan for his stage carpenter. He sketches his scene for the painter. According to Daniel Frohman, whose name is so closely associated with Pinero's in the American career of the latter, the Pinero script is filled with minute stage directions — "so complete and thorough in detail that it was not difficult to rehearse them from the author's point of view. In 'The Amazons' (1893), for instance, the play was so surcharged with business that one-half of the humourous effect lay in the interrelated action of the characters."

However enthusiastic our admiration for the body of Pinero's work, there is no denying the fact, as Shaw says, that no one would guess he was a contemporary of Ibsen, Tolstoi, Meredith, or Sarah Grand. With him, thought is but a part of the situation. It does not go deep. It has no very great partisan feeling. His plays are clever sketches rather than realistic paintings of social conditions. In his usual humourous way of stating things, Shaw writes: "It is significant of the difference between my temperament and Mr. Pinero's, that when he, as a little boy, first heard 'Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming', he wept; whereas at the same tender age I simply noted with scorn the obvious plagiarism from 'Cheer, boys, cheer.'"

In other words, Shaw would arrive at the same conclusion reached by Mario Borso, that Pinero's power is entirely emotional.

Not strange, therefore, that in this re-statement of Pinero, we cannot place him in that development, so excellently outlined by Holbrook Jackson in "The Eighteen Nineties." For, as Mr. Jackson has said, Pinero was a pioneer of the new movement only by way of compromise.

Those social elements which are to be noted in the rise in influence of the Fabian Society had no interest for him when he was a young man. The deeper social sense, which has been behind Shaw and Brieux, Galsworthy and Barker, has claimed none of his concern. As a technical expert, he came into the dramatic horizon when English drama was at its lowest ebb. The critic, P. P. Howe, in his "Dramatic Portraits", claims that the final estimate of Pinero will be that despite his defects he kept the theatres open at a time when they threatened to shut down.

In the re-reading of the Pinero plays, one is still impressed by the freshness of his stories. They have not staled after a quarter of a century, though we may be able to see more of the machinery in "Tanqueray" than we did when it was first produced. What fate will overtake Pinero during the next quarter of a century is hard to determine, especially in this onrush of democratic taste. It is economics and sociology, not technique, that have made him a little old-fashioned, that have taken from him his special claim to distinction. The vitality of *Paula* and *Agnes* is greater than the vitality of *Camille*. These plays may yet find their way into a national repertory as permanent examples of a period drama, but they have no direct place in that renaissance which immediately preceded the present war, and which is represented by Galsworthy's "The Silver Box" (1906), "Justice" (1910), and "The Pigeon" (1912), or by Barker's "The Madras House" (1910), "Waste" (1907), and "The Voysey Inheritance" (1905). Throughout Pinero's career, there has been a peculiar lack of any of the poetry of life, of any of the fundamental re-

lationships which remain, no matter how time and place may change. Nevertheless, considering the period which has elapsed since 1893 and 1895, it is surprising how well the framework of "Tanqueray" and "Ebbsmith" holds its own. This permanence of framework is due, not to the mental Pinero, but entirely to his one tremendous claim on our attention — his worth technically as a dramatic artist.

"The Gay Lord Quex" has been selected as representative of the technical qualities of Pinero in characterization and in story-telling. It may be true, as Howe says in his "Dramatic Portraits", that it took Pinero two acts to get *Quex* into a bedroom, and two acts to get him out; but there is something more to "The Gay Lord Quex" than that. It is, as Max Beerbohm proclaimed it, when it was first given at the Globe Theatre, London, on April 8, 1899, a technical *coup*. At the time of its presentation, both in England and New York, it was probably one of the most talked-about pieces on the current stage. In the character of *Sophy* and in the character of *Quex*, Pinero's whole interest seems to have centred. He gives us *genre* pictures. His technique is deft and definite. But even here, as Arthur Symons wrote, when the play was revived at the Duke of York's Theatre, in 1902, "He has no breadth of view, but he has a clear view. He suggests nothing; he tells you all he knows."

The play was brought to America by Mr. Hare, and was given at the New York Criterion Theatre, on November 12, 1900. A revival was seen in New York during the season of 1917, the text being revamped by Pinero to accord with the changing styles of architecture and fashion. In other words, "The Gay Lord Quex" was sprinkled with up-to-date electrical contrivances and automobiles. In its technique the play was in part old-fashioned, but still showed the masterly hand of the seasoned dramatist.

THE GAY LORD QUEX

(1899)

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

By ARTHUR W. PINERO

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ACT I

Establishment of Sophy Fullgarney, Manicurist and Dispenser of Articles for the Toilet, 185 New Bond Street.

(*Afternoon*)

ACT II

At Lady Owbridge's. The "Italian Garden," Fauncey Court, Richmond.

(*Evening*)

ACT III

A Boudoir and Bedroom at Fauncey Court.

(*Night*)

ACT IV

In Bond Street Again.

(*The Following Day*)

The action of the Play is comprised within the space of twenty-four hours.

THE CAST FOR THE FIRST ENGLISH PRODUCTION

		Globe Theatre, London, April 8, 1899
THE MARQUESS OF QUEX		Mr. John Hare
SIR CHICHESTER FRAYNE	*Governor of Uumbos, West Coast of Africa*	Mr. Gilbert Hare
CAPTAIN BASTLING		Mr. Charles Cherry
"VALMA", otherwise FRANK POLLITT	*a Professional Palmist*	Mr. Frank Gillmore
THE DUCHESS OF STROOD		Miss Fortescue
JULIA, COUNTESS OF OWBRIDGE		Miss Fanny Coleman
MRS. JACK EDEN		Miss Mona K. Oram
MURIEL EDEN	*her sister-in-law*	Miss Mabel Terry-Lewis
SOPHY FULLGARNEY	*a Manicurist*	Miss Irene Vanbrugh
MISS MOON	*her assistants*	Miss Laura M'Gilvray
MISS HUDDLE	*her assistants*	Miss Doris Templeton
MISS CLARIDGE	*her assistants*	Miss Victoria Addison
MISS LIMBIRD	*her assistants*	Miss Marion Dolby
A YOUNG LADY AND OTHER PATRONS OF MISS FULLGARNEY		Miss K. Carpenter Mrs. Copleston Miss B. Coleman Mr. Richard Lambart Mr. Hubert Evelyn
SERVANTS AT FAUNCEY COURT		Mr. Abbot and Mr. Lennox

[This play was first produced in America, at the Criterion Theatre, New York, on November 12, 1900, with Mr. Hare as *Quex*.]

THE GAY LORD QUEX

ACT I

The scene represents a manicure establishment in New Bond Street. It is a front room upon the first floor with three French-windows affording a view of certain buildings on the east side of the street. On the left, furthest from the spectator, is a wide, arched opening, apparently leading to another apartment, in which is the door giving entrance to the rooms from the staircase. Nearer, there is another French-window, opening on to an expanse of "leads" and showing the exterior of the wall of the further room above-mentioned. From the right, above the middle window, runs an ornamental partition, about nine feet in height, with panels of opaque glass. This partition extends more than half-way across the room, then runs forward for some distance, turns off at a sharp angle, and terminates between the arched opening and the window on the left. That part of the partition running from right to left is closed on its left side and forms, therefore, a separate room or compartment. Facing the audience, on the right, is a door admitting to this compartment; and, on the left, also in the partition opposite the windows on the right, is an opening with a looped-back portière. The space between this opening and the further room forms a narrow ante-room, containing articles of furniture visible through the opening. Mirrors are affixed to the right wall, between the lower and the middle window and between the middle window and the partition, while on the left, between the window and the partition, is another mirror. A number of business cards are stuck in the frames of the mirrors. On the right, before each of the two lower windows, turned from the spectators, is a capacious arm-chair, made in cane open-work. Attached to the arms of these chairs are little screens — also made of cane — shielding, in a measure, the occupants of the chairs from observation. Upon both the right and left arms of these chairs are circular frames in cane, shaped to receive bowls of water. Above each of the screen-chairs stands a smaller chair, set to face the larger one; and beside the small chair, on its right hand, is a low table upon which are arranged the instruments and toilet necessaries employed in the process of manicure. On the right, between the window and the partition, is a three-cornered what-not, on which are set out packets of soap and of powder and other articles of the toilet. At the further end of the room, in the centre, stands a desk laden with account-books; and, above the desk, its back against the partition, is a chair. On the right is a hat-and-umbrella stand. Nearer, in the centre, is a large circular table on which are displayed bottles of scent and liquid soap, cases of instruments for manicure, and some wooden bowls of bath-soap with lather brushes. On the right and left are ordinary chairs. Placed against the partition on the left, and facing the audience, is a cabinet, making a display similar to that upon the what-not. Nearer, on the left, there is another screen-chair set to face the audience; below it is a smaller seat and, by the side of the smaller seat, another little table with manicure tools, etc. Some framed photographs of ladies hang against the wood-work of the partition and in the wall-spaces; and in the lower and middle windows, on the right, bird-cages are suspended.

The light is that of a bright day in June.

[*On the right* MISS CLARIDGE *and* MISS HUDDLE *are in the final stages of manicuring two smart-looking men.*

The men occupy the screen-chairs; the manicurists — comely girls in black frocks — sit, facing the men, upon the smaller seats. On the left MISS MOON *is rougeing and varnishing the nails of a fashionably-dressed young lady whose maid is seated at the table in the centre.* MISS LIMBIRD *is at the desk, deep in accounts*]

MISS MOON. [*To the young lady*] You won't have them *too* red, will you?

YOUNG LADY. Not too red — nicely flushed.

FIRST GENTLEMAN [*examining his nails critically as he rises*]. I say though, that's a vast improvement!

MISS CLARIDGE. Getting more shapely, aren't they?

FIRST GENTLEMAN. Thanks awfully.

[*He pays* MISS LIMBIRD, *stands talking to her for a while, and ultimately strolls away through the opening in the partition. After putting her table in order,* MISS CLARIDGE *goes out the same way, carrying her bowl of water and towel*]

MISS MOON. [*To the young lady*] Have you had your hand read yet, madam, by any of these palmists?

YOUNG LADY. Heavens, yes! I've been twice to that woman Bernstein, and I don't know how often to Chiron.

MISS MOON. Ah, you ought to try Valma.

YOUNG LADY. Valma?

MISS MOON. He's the latest. Ladies are flocking to him.

YOUNG LADY. Really?

MISS MOON. Yes. Such taking manners.

YOUNG LADY. Where does he ——?

MISS MOON. 186 — next door. [*Indicating the window on the left*] You can see his waiting-room from that window.

YOUNG LADY. Is he a guinea or half a guinea?

MISS MOON. Oh, he's a guinea.

YOUNG LADY. That's a bore.

MISS MOON. Ah, but consider, madam — his rooms are draped from ceiling to floor in blue velvet. Blue velvet! fancy! Not that I've had the privilege of viewing them myself; Miss F. is our authority.

YOUNG LADY. Miss F.?

MISS MOON. I beg your pardon — Miss Fullgarney. Valma is quite neighbourly with Miss Fullgarney.

[*A door-gong sounds — as it does every time any one enters or quits the establishment — signifying that the first gentleman has departed*]

SECOND GENTLEMAN [*rising*]. Much obliged. [*Putting a tip into* MISS HUDDLE'S *hand*] For yourself.

MISS HUDDLE. Much obliged to *you*.

SECOND GENTLEMAN. You're a fresh face here?

MISS HUDDLE. Yes; I used to be with Mossu and Madame Roget in Mortimer Street.

SECOND GENTLEMAN. I'll ask for you next time. What name?

MISS HUDDLE. Miss Huddle.

SECOND GENTLEMAN. Huddle?

MISS HUDDLE. Well, p'r'aps you'd better ask for Miss Hud-delle; I fancy Miss Fullgarney is going to alter me to that.

SECOND GENTLEMAN [*with a nod*]. Goo' bye.

MISS HUDDLE. Good-day, sir.

[*He pays* MISS LIMBIRD *and goes out. The maid rises and hands the young lady her gloves*]

MISS MOON [*taking a card from the mirror*]. Would you like a card of Valma's, madam, just to remind you?

YOUNG LADY [*accepting the card and reading it*]. "Valma. Palmist. Professor of the Sciences of Chiromancy and Chirognomy. 186, New Bond Street." [*Giving the card to her maid*] Keep that. [*The door-gong sounds*]

MISS MOON [*opening a window*]. Look, madam. That's one of his rooms; the window there — the open one ——

YOUNG LADY. Yes, I see. Thanks. Good morning.

MISS MOON. Good morning.

[*The young lady pays* MISS LIMBIRD *and goes, followed by her maid*]

MISS HUDDLE. [*To* MISS MOON] What time is it, dear?

MISS MOON [*putting her table in order*]. Half-past one. Lunch time.

MISS HUDDLE. Thought so; I've sech a vacancy.

[MISS HUDDLE *goes out, carrying her bowl and towel, as* FRANK POLLITT — "VALMA" — *appears at the window on the left — a well, if rather showily, dressed young fellow, wearing a frock coat, white waistcoat, and patent-leather boots. He is handsome*

in a common-place way and, though stilted and self-conscious, earnest in speech and bearing]

POLLITT [*looking in*]. Excuse me ——

MISS MOON [*startled*]. Oh! oh, Mr. Valma!

POLLITT [*entering*]. Is Miss Fullgarney in the way?

MISS MOON [*gazing at him in modest admiration*]. She's with a lady in the private room, Mr. Valma.

[*The door in the partition opens*]

SOPHY [*from the private room*]. Oh, no, madam, I promise I won't forget. Certainly not. I take too much interest in your daughter's nails for that.

MISS MOON. This is her.

[*A middle-aged lady enters from the private room followed by* SOPHY FULLGARNEY. *The customer pays at the desk while* SOPHY *rattles on.* SOPHY *is a pretty, elegant, innocently vulgar, fascinating young woman of six-and-twenty*]

SOPHY [*with the air of the proprietress of a prosperous establishment*]. Oh, yes, it did slip my memory to come on Thursday, didn't it? The truth is I had a most racking head, a thing I never have — well, I oughtn't to say never have, ought I? [*To* MISS LIMBIRD] Now, Miss Limbird, see that two pots of Crème de Mimosa are posted to Mrs. Arment, Carlos Place; and book me, please — *me* — you thoroughly understand? — to attend upon Miss Arment to-morrow evening at seven. [*Accompanying the customer, who now withdraws*] To-morrow evening at seven — without fail. [*Raising her voice*] The door, Miss Claridge. Good morning, madam. Good afternoon.

[*The door-gong sounds*]

SOPHY. Come, girls, you can get to your lunches.

[MISS LIMBIRD *leaves her desk and goes out*]

MISS MOON. Here's Mr. Valma, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY [*with a little gasp*]. Mr. Valma! [*Approaching him*] How do you do?

POLLITT [*advancing*]. Pardon me for the liberty I have taken in again crossing the leads.

SOPHY [*looking away from him*]. No liberty at all.

POLLITT. I desire a few words with you, Miss Fullgarney, and it struck me that at this time of the day ——

SOPHY. Yes, there's nothing doing here just at lunch-time.

POLLITT. Perhaps you would graciously allow me to converse with you while you ——

SOPHY [*regaining her self-possession*]. Oh, I had my lunch an hour ago; I came over so ravenous. [*Going to* MISS MOON, *who is still lost in admiration of* POLLITT — *in a whisper*] Be off, child. Don't stand staring at Mr. Valma.

MISS MOON [*in* SOPHY'S *ear*]. I think I've got him another!

SOPHY. Shut up!

[MISS MOON *withdraws, with her bowl and towel*]

SOPHY. [*To* POLLITT] Did you catch what she said? Oh, it doesn't matter if you did; you know we are all working for you, like niggers.

POLLITT [*tenderly*]. Ah!

SOPHY. Not a customer leaves my place without having heard your name mentioned. My girls are regular bricks.

POLLITT [*approaching her*]. And what are you?

SOPHY [*looking away again*]. Oh, I do no more than any of the others.

POLLITT. Do you expect me to believe that? you, their queen! No, it is *you* who have helped me to steer my bark into the flowing waters of popularity.

SOPHY [*nervously*]. Extremely pleased, I — I'm sure. [*He is close beside her; a cork is drawn loudly. They part, startled and disturbed. She goes to the opening in the partition, raising her voice slightly*] Girls, can't you draw your corks a shade quieter? Nice if somebody was coming upstairs!

MISS LIMBIRD [*in the distance*]. Very sorry, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY. [*To* POLLITT, *as she toys with the articles upon the circular table*] Everything is so up this weather. It's their lime-juice champagne.

POLLITT [*by her side again — suddenly*]. I love you!

SOPHY. Oh, Mr. Valma!

POLLITT. I love you! Ever since I had the honour of being presented to you by Mr. Salmon, the picture-dealer next door, I have thought of you, dreamt of you, constantly. [*She brushes past him; he follows her*] Miss Fullgarney, you will accord me permission to pay you my addresses?

SOPHY [*in a flutter*]. I — I am highly

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flattered and complimented, Mr. Valma, by your proposal ——

POLLITT [*taking her hand*]. Flattered — no!

SOPHY [*withdrawing her hand*]. Oh, but please wait!

POLLITT. Wait!

SOPHY. I mean, I certainly couldn't dream of accepting the attentions of any man until he fully understood ——

POLLITT. Understood what?

SOPHY [*summoning all her dignity*]. Oh, I'll be perfectly straight with you — until he fully understood that, whatever my station in life may be now, I have risen from rather — well, I may say *very* small beginnings.

POLLITT. What matters that?

SOPHY. Oh, but I beg your pardon — it does. [*Relaxing*] I am sure I can depend on you not to give me away all over the place?

POLLITT. Miss Fullgarney ——!

SOPHY [*after a cautious glance round*]. You know, Mr. Valma, I was always a self-willed, independent sort of a girl — a handful, they used to call me; and when father died I determined to have done with my stepmother, and to come to London at any price. I was seventeen then.

POLLITT. Yes?

SOPHY. Oh, it's nothing to be ashamed of, really; still, I did begin life in town [*with an uneasy little laugh and a toss of the head*] — you'd hardly believe it! — as a nursery-maid.

POLLITT. H'm! I am aware that is not considered ——

SOPHY. I should think not! Oh, of course, in time I rose to be Useful Maid, and then Maid. I've been lady's-maid in some excellent houses. And when I got sick of maiding I went to Dundas's opposite, and served three years at the hairdressing; that's an extremely refined position, I needn't say. And then some kind friends routed me out [*surveying the room proudly*] and put me into this.

POLLITT. Then why bestow a second thought upon your beginnings?

SOPHY. No, I suppose I oughtn't to. Nobody can breathe a word against my respectability. All the same, I am quite aware that it mightn't be over-pleasant for a gentleman to remember that his wife was once — [*sitting in the screen-chair*] well, a servant.

POLLITT [*by her chair*]. It would not weigh on my mind if you had been kitchen-maid [*pointing out of the window*] at Fletcher's Hotel. [*Looking about him*] It's this business I don't care for.

SOPHY. This business!

POLLITT. For *you*. If you did no more than glide about your rooms, superintending your young ladies! [*Sitting, facing her*] But I hate the idea of your sitting here, or there, holding some man's hand in yours!

SOPHY [*suddenly ablaze*]. Do you! [*Pointing out of the window*] Yet you sit there, day after day, and hold women's hands in yours!

POLLITT [*eagerly*]. You are jealous of me?

SOPHY [*panting*]. A little.

POLLITT [*going down upon one knee*]. Ah, you do love me!

SOPHY [*faintly*]. Fondly.

POLLITT. And you will be my wife?

SOPHY. Yes.

POLLITT [*embracing her*]. My dearest!

SOPHY. Not yet! suppose the girls saw you!

POLLITT. Let all the world see us!

SOPHY [*submissively, laying her cheek upon his brow*] Oh, but I wish — and yet I don't wish ——

POLLITT. What?

SOPHY. That you were not so much my superior in every way.

POLLITT [*in an altered voice*]. Sophy.

SOPHY [*in a murmur, her eyes closed*]. Eh-h-h?

POLLITT. I have had my early struggles too.

SOPHY. You, love?

POLLITT. Yes. If you should ever hear ——

SOPHY. Hear ——?

POLLITT. That until recently I was a solicitor's clerk ——

SOPHY [*slightly surprised*]. A solicitor's clerk?

POLLITT. You would not turn against me?

SOPHY. Ah, as if ——!

POLLITT. You know my real name is Pollitt — Frank Toleman Pollitt?

SOPHY. I've heard it isn't really Valma. [*With a little shiver*] Never mind that.

POLLITT. But I shall be Frank to you henceforth, sha'n't I?

SOPHY. Oh, no, no! always Valma to me — [*dreamily*] my Valma. [*Their lips meet in a prolonged kiss. Then the door-gong sounds*] Get up! [*They rise in a hurry. She holds his hand tightly*]

Wait and see who it is. Oh, don't go for a minute! stay a minute!

[*They separate; he stands looking out upon the leads.* Miss Claridge *enters, preceding the* Marquess of Quex *and* Sir Chicester Frayne. Lord Quex *is forty-eight, keen-faced and bright-eyed, faultless in dress, in manner debonair and charming.* Frayne *is a genial wreck of about five-and-forty — the lean and shrivelled remnant of a once good-looking man. His face is yellow and puckered, his hair prematurely silvered, his mustache palpably touched-up*]

Quex [*perceiving* Sophy *and approaching her*]. How are you, Miss Fullgarney?

Sophy [*respectfully but icily*]. Oh, how do you do, my lord?

[Miss Claridge *withdraws.* Frayne *comes foward, eyeing* Sophy *with interest*]

Quex. My aunt — Lady Owbridge — has asked me to meet her here at two o'clock. Her ladyship is lunching at a teashop close by — bunning is a more fitting expression — with Mrs. Eden and Miss Eden.

Sophy [*gladly*]. Miss Muriel!

Quex. Yes, I believe Miss Muriel will place her pretty finger-tips in your charge [*partly to* Frayne] while I escort Lady Owbridge and Mrs. Jack to view this new biblical picture — [*with a gesture*] a few doors up. What is the subject? — Moses in the Bulrushes. [*To* Frayne] Come with us, Chick.

Sophy. It's not quite two, my lord; if you like, you've just time to run in next door and have your palm read.

Quex. My palm ——?

Sophy. By this extraordinary palmist everybody is talking about — Valma.

Quex [*pleasantly*]. One of these fortune-telling fellows, eh? [*Shaking his head*] I prefer the gipsy on Epsom racecourse.

Sophy [*under her breath*]. Oh, indeed! [*Curtly*] Please take a seat.

[*She flounces up to the desk and busies herself there vindictively*]

Frayne. [*To* Quex] Who's that gal? what's her name?

Quex. Fullgarney; a protégée of the Edens. Her father was bailiff to old Mr. Eden, at their place in Norfolk.

Frayne. Rather alluring — eh, what?

Quex [*wincing*]. Don't, Chick!

Frayne. My dear Harry, it is perfectly proper, now that you are affianced to Miss Eden, and have reformed, all that sort of thing — it is perfectly proper that you should no longer observe pretty women too narrowly.

Quex. Obviously.

Frayne. But do bear in mind that your old friend is not so pledged. Recollect that *I* have been stuck for the last eight years, with intervals of leave, on the West Coast of Africa, nursing malaria ——

Quex [*severely*]. Only malaria?

Frayne [*mournfully*]. There is nothing else to nurse, dear Harry, on the West Coast of Africa. [*Glancing at* Sophy] Yes, by gad, that gal is alluring!

Quex [*walking away*]. Tssh! you're a bad companion, Chick!

[*He goes to the window and looks into the street.* Frayne *joins him.* Sophy, *seizing her opportunity, comes down to* Pollitt]

Sophy. [*To* Pollitt] Valma, dear, you see that man?

Pollitt. Which of the two?

Sophy. The dark one. That's Lord Quex — the wickedest man in London.

Pollitt. He looks it. [*Jealously*] Have you ever cut his nails?

Sophy. No, love, no. Oh, I've heard such tales about him!

Pollitt. What tales?

Sophy. I'll tell you [*demurely*] when we're married. And the worst of it is, he is engaged to Miss Eden.

Pollitt. Who is she?

Sophy. Miss Muriel Eden, my foster-sister; the dearest friend I have in the world — except you, sweetheart. It was Muriel and her brother Jack who put me into this business. And now my darling is to be sacrificed to that gay old thing ——!

[*The door-gong sounds;* Quex *turns expectantly*]

Pollitt. If Miss Eden is your foster-sister ——

Sophy. Yes, of course, she's six-and-twenty. But the poor girl has been worried into it by her sister-in-law, Mrs. Jack, whose one idea is Title and Position. Title and Position with that old rake by her side!

[Miss Limbird *enters, preceding* Captain Bastling — *a smart, soldierly-*

looking man of about eight-and-twenty. MISS LIMBIRD *returns to her seat at the desk*]

SOPHY [*seeing* BASTLING]. My gracious!

POLLITT. What's the matter?

QUEX [*recognizing* BASTLING *and greeting him*]. Hallo, Napier! how are you?

BASTLING [*shaking hands with* QUEX]. Hallo, Quex!

QUEX. What are you doing here?

SOPHY. [*To* POLLITT] Phew! I hope to goodness Lord Quex won't tumble to anything.

POLLITT. Tumble — to what?

[QUEX *introduces* BASTLING *to* FRAYNE]

SOPHY. You don't understand; it's Captain Bastling — the man Muriel is really fond of.

POLLITT. What, while she's engaged ——?

SOPHY [*with clenched hands*]. Yes, and she shall marry him too, my darling shall, if I can help to bring it about.

POLLITT. You?

SOPHY. Bless 'em, I don't know how they'd contrive without me!

POLLITT. Contrive ——?

SOPHY [*fondly*]. You old stupid! whenever Muriel is coming to be manicured she sends Captain Bastling a warning overnight [*squeezing* POLLITT'S *arm, roguishly*]; this kind of thing — "My heart is heavy and my nails are long. To-morrow — three-thirty." Ha, ha, ha!

POLLITT. Dearest, let me advise you ——

SOPHY [*her hand upon his lips*]. Ah, don't lecture! [BASTLING *saunters forward to attract* SOPHY'S *attention*] Oh ——! [*To* POLLITT, *hurriedly*] Go now. Pop in again by-and-by. [*Caressingly*] Um-m-m! my love!

[POLLITT *goes out by the window*]

SOPHY [*joining* BASTLING — *formally*]. Good-day, Captain Bastling.

BASTLING. Good-afternoon, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY [*dropping her voice*]. She'll be here in a minute.

BASTLING [*in low tones — making a show of examining the articles on the circular table*]. Yes, I had a note from her this morning. [*Glancing at* QUEX] Confounded nuisance ——!

SOPHY [*pretending to display the articles*]. It's all right; he's got to take Lady Owbridge and Mrs. Jack Eden to look at Moses in the Bulrushes — a picture ——

BASTLING. Sophy — I've bad news.

SOPHY. No! what?

BASTLING. My regiment is ordered to Hong-Kong.

SOPHY. Great heavens! when are you off?

BASTLING. In a fortnight.

SOPHY. Oh, my poor darling!

BASTLING. I must see her again to-morrow. I've something serious to propose to her.

SOPHY [*half in eagerness, half in fright*] Have you?

BASTLING. But to-morrow it must be alone, Sophy; I can't say what I have to say in a few hasty whispers, with all your girls flitting about — and perhaps a customer or two here. Alone!

SOPHY. Without me?

BASTLING. Surely you can trust us. To-morrow at twelve. You'll manage it?

SOPHY. How can I — alone?

BASTLING. You're our only friend. Think!

SOPHY [*glancing suddenly toward the left*]. Valma's rooms!

[FRAYNE *has wandered to the back of the circular table, and, through his eyeglass, is again observing* SOPHY. QUEX *now joins him*]

BASTLING [*perceiving them — to* SOPHY]. Look out!

SOPHY [*taking a bottle from his hand — raising her voice*]. You'll receive the perfume in the course of the afternoon. [*Replacing the bottle upon the table*] Shall I do your nails?

BASTLING. Thanks.

[*They move away. He takes his place in the screen-chair; she sits facing him. During the process of manicuring they talk together earnestly*]

FRAYNE [*eyeing* SOPHY]. Slim but shapely. Slim but shapely.

[MISS MOON *enters, with a bowl of water. Having adjusted the bowl upon the arm of the screen-chair, she retires*]

FRAYNE. There's another of 'em. Plain. [*Watching* MISS MOON *as she goes out*] I don't know — rather alluring. [*Finding* QUEX *by his side*] Beg your pardon.

QUEX. Didn't hear you.

FRAYNE. Glad of it. At the same time, old friend, you will forgive me for remarking that a man's virtuous resolu-

tions must be — ha, ha! — somewhat feeble, hey? — when he flinches at the mere admiration of beauty on the part of a pal, connoisseur though that pal undoubtedly is.

QUEX. Oh, my dear Chick, my resolutions are firm enough.

FRAYNE [*dubiously*]. H'm!

QUEX. And my prudery is consistent with the most laudable intentions, I assure you. But the fact is, dear chap, I go in fear and trembling ——

FRAYNE. Ah!

QUEX. No, no, not for my strength of mind — fear lest any trivial act of mine, however guileless; the most innocent glance in the direction of a decent-looking woman; should be misinterpreted by the good ladies in whose hands I have placed myself — especially Aunt Julia. You remember Lady Owbridge?

FRAYNE. Why did you intrust yourself ——?

QUEX. My one chance! [*Taking* FRAYNE *to the table, against which they both lean shoulder to shoulder — his voice falling into a strain of tenderness*] Chick, when I fell in love with Miss Eden ——

FRAYNE [*in sentimental retrospection*]. Fell in love! what memories are awakened by the dear old phrase!

QUEX [*dryly*]. Yes. Will you talk about your love-affairs, Chick, or shall I ——?

FRAYNE. Certainly — you. Go on, Harry.

QUEX. When I proposed marriage to Miss Eden — it was at the hunt-ball at Stanridge ——

FRAYNE [*his eyes sparkling*]. Did you select a retired corner — with flowers — by any chance?

QUEX. There *were* flowers.

FRAYNE. I know — *I* know! Nearly twenty years ago, and the faint scent of the *Gardenia Florida* remains in my nostrils!

QUEX. Quite so. Would *you* like to ——?

FRAYNE [*sitting*]. No, no — you. Excuse me. You go on.

QUEX [*sitting on the edge of the table, looking down upon* FRAYNE]. When I proposed to Miss Eden I was certain — even while I was stammering it out — I was certain that my infernal evil character ——

FRAYNE. Ah, yes. I've always been a dooced deal more artful than you, Harry, over my little *amours*. [*Chuckling*] Ha, ha! devilish cunning!

QUEX. And I was right. Her first words were, "Think of your life; how can you ask this of me?" — her first words and her last, that evening. I was desperate, Chick, for I —— well, I'm hit, you know.

FRAYNE. What did you do?

QUEX. Came to town by the first train in the morning — drove straight off to Richmond, to my pious aunt. Found her in bed with asthma; *I* got her up. And I almost went down on my knees to her, Chick.

FRAYNE. Not really?

QUEX. I did — old man as I am! no, I'm not old.

FRAYNE. Forty-eight. Ha, ha! I'm only forty-five.

QUEX. But you've had malaria ——

FRAYNE. Dry up, Harry!

QUEX. So we're quits. Well, down on my marrow-bones I went, metaphorically, and there and then I made my vows to old Aunt Julia, and craved her help; and she dropped tears on me, Chick, like a mother. And the result was that within a month I became engaged to Miss Eden.

FRAYNE. The young lady soon waived her ——

QUEX [*getting off the table*]. I beg your pardon — the young lady did nothing of the kind. But with Aunt Julia's aid I showed 'em all that it was a genuine case of done with the old life — a real, genuine instance. [*Balancing upon the back of the chair*] I've sold my house in Norfolk Street.

FRAYNE. You'll want one.

QUEX [*gravely*]. Not that one — for Muriel. [*Brightly*] And I'm living sedately at Richmond, under Aunt Julia's wing. Muriel is staying at Fauncey Court too just now; she's up from Norfolk for the Season, chaperoned by Mrs. Jack. [*Sitting, nursing his knee, with a sigh of content*] Ah! after all, it's very pleasant to be a good boy.

FRAYNE. When is it to take place?

QUEX. At the end of the year; assuming, of course ——

FRAYNE. That you continue to behave prettily? [QUEX *assents with a wave of the hand*] The slightest lapse on your part ——?

QUEX. Impossible.

FRAYNE. But it would ——?

QUEX [*a little impatiently*]. Naturally.

FRAYNE. Well, six months pass quickly — everywhere but on the West Coast of Africa.

QUEX. And then — you shall be my best man, Chick, if you're still home.

FRAYNE [*rising*]. Hah! I never thought ——

QUEX [*rising*]. No; I who always laughed at marriage as a dull depravity permitted to the respectable classes! I who always maintained that man's whole duty to woman — meaning his mistresses — that a man's duty to a woman is liberally discharged when he has made a settlement on her, or stuck her into his Will! [*Blowing the ideas from him*] Phugh!

[*He goes to the little table, and examines the objects upon it*]

FRAYNE [*following him*]. Talking of — ah — mistresses, I suppose you've ——?

QUEX. Oh, yes, they're all ——

FRAYNE. Made happy and comfortable?

QUEX. I've done my utmost.

FRAYNE. Mrs. ——?

QUEX [*rather irritably*]. I say, all of them.

FRAYNE. No trouble with Lady——?

QUEX. No, no, no, no.

FRAYNE. What about the little Duchess? [QUEX *pauses in his examination of a nail-clipper*] Eh?

QUEX [*turning to him, slightly embarrassed*]. Odd that you should mention her.

FRAYNE. Why?

QUEX. She's staying at Fauncey Court also.

FRAYNE. The Duchess!

QUEX. She proposed herself for a visit. I dared not raise any objection, for her reputation's sake; the ladies would have suspected at once. You're one of the few, Chick, who ever got an inkling of that business.

FRAYNE. Very awkward!

QUEX. No. She's behaving admirably. [*Thoughtfully — with a wry face*] Of course she was always a little romantic and sentimental.

FRAYNE. By gad, though, what an alluring woman!

QUEX [*shortly*]. Perhaps.

FRAYNE. Ho, come! you don't mean to tell me ——?

QUEX [*with dignity*]. Yes, I do — upon my honour, I've forgotten. [*The door-gong sounds*] This must be the ladies.

[MURIEL EDEN *enters, followed by* MISS CLARIDGE. MURIEL *is a tall, fresh-looking, girlish young woman, prettily dressed.* SOPHY *rises and meets her*]

MURIEL [*behind the circular table — to* SOPHY, *breathlessly, as if from the exertion of running upstairs*] Well, Sophy! [*Looking round*] Is Lord Quex ——? [SOPHY *glances toward* QUEX, *who advances*] Oh, yes. [*To* QUEX] Lady Owbridge and Mrs. Jack won't fag upstairs just now. They're waiting for you in the carriage, they asked me to say.

QUEX [*in tender solicitation*]. Moses in the Bulrushes? You still elect to have your nails cut?

MURIEL. Thanks, I [*with an effort*] — I've already seen the picture.

QUEX. And its merits are not sufficient ——?

MURIEL [*guiltily*]. I thought the bulrushes rather well done.

QUEX. May I present my old friend, Sir Chichester Frayne?

MURIEL. [*To* FRAYNE] How do you do?

QUEX. [*To* FRAYNE] Will you come, Chick? [*To* MURIEL] We shall be back very soon.

[MURIEL *nods to* QUEX *and* FRAYNE *and turns away to the window, removing her gloves.* SOPHY *joins her*]

FRAYNE. [*To* QUEX] As I suspected — the typical, creamy English girl. We all do it! we all come to that, sooner or later.

QUEX [*looking from* MURIEL *to* FRAYNE, *proudly*]. Well ——?

FRAYNE [*in answer, kissing his fingertips to the air*]. Alluring!

QUEX. Ha! [*Hastily*] We're keeping the ladies waiting.

[*He goes out.* FRAYNE *is following* QUEX, *when he encounters* MISS CLARIDGE. *He pauses, gazing at her admiringly. The door-gong sounds*]

MISS CLARIDGE [*surprised*]. Do you wish anything, sir?

FRAYNE [*with a little sigh of longing*]. Ah — h!

MISS CLARIDGE [*coldly*]. Shall I cut your nails?

FRAYNE [*wofully*]. That's it, dear young lady — you can't!

MISS CLARIDGE [*with hauteur*]. Reely! Why not, sir?

FRAYNE. I regret to say I bite 'em.

[*He goes out.* MISS CLARIDGE *titters loudly to* MISS LIMBIRD]

SOPHY. [*To* MISS CLARIDGE, *reprovingly*] Miss Claridge! I don't require you at present.

[MISS CLARIDGE *withdraws*]

SOPHY [*going to* MISS LIMBIRD]. Miss Limbird, will *you* oblige me? hot water, please.

[MISS LIMBIRD *goes out. At once* SOPHY *gives a signal to* BASTLING *and* MURIEL, *and keeps guard.* BASTLING *and* MURIEL *talk in low, hurried tones*]

BASTLING [*on the right of the circular table*]. How are you?

MURIEL [*on the other side, giving him her hand across the table*]. I don't know. [*Withdrawing her hand*] I hate myself!

BASTLING. Hate yourself?

MURIEL. For this sort of thing. [*Glancing round apprehensively*]. Oh!

BASTLING. Don't be frightened. Sophy's there.

MURIEL. I'm nervous — shaky. When I wrote to you last night I thought I should be able to sneak up to town this morning only with a maid. And you've met Quex too!

BASTLING. None of them suspect ——?

MURIEL. No. Oh, but go now!

BASTLING. Already! may I not sit and watch you?

MURIEL. Not to-day.

BASTLING. You must hear my news, then, from Sophy; she'll tell you ——

MURIEL. News?

SOPHY [*turning to them sharply*]. Hsst!

MURIEL. Good-by!

BASTLING [*grasping her arm*]. Haven't you one loving little speech for me?

SOPHY [*behind the table*]. Gar—r—rh!

[*He releases* MURIEL *and picks up a large wooden bowl of bath-soap, just as* MISS LIMBIRD *re-enters with the hot water.* MURIEL *moves away, hastily*]

SOPHY. [*To* BASTLING, *taking the soap from him — raising her voice*] Thank you — much obliged. [*Transferring the soap to* MISS LIMBIRD *and relieving her of the bowl of water*] For Captain Bastling, with a bottle of Fleur de Lilas.

[MISS LIMBIRD *returns to her desk;* SOPHY *deposits the bowl of water upon the arm of the screen-chair;* BASTLING *fetches his hat, and gives some directions to* MISS LIMBIRD]

MURIEL. [*To* SOPHY, *in a whisper*] Sophy, these extravagances on his part! I am the cause of them! he is not in the least well off!

SOPHY. Don't worry; it's all booked. Ha, ha! bless him, he'll never get his account from me! [BASTLING, *with a parting glance in the direction of* MURIEL *and* SOPHY, *goes out*] He's gone.

[MISS LIMBIRD *also goes out, carrying the bowl of bath-soap*]

MURIEL [*with a sigh of relief*]. Oh!

SOPHY [*coming to her*]. We're by ourselves for a minute. Give me a good hug. [*Embracing her*] My dear! my darling! ha, ha, ha! you shall be the first to hear of it — I'm engaged.

MURIEL. Sophy! to whom?

SOPHY. To Mr. Valma, the great palmist.

MURIEL. What, the young man you've talked to me about — next door? [*Kissing her*] I hope you are doing well for yourself, dear.

SOPHY. He's simply perfect! he's—! oh, how can I be such a brute, talking of my own happiness ——! [*In an altered tone*] Darling, Captain Bastling's regiment is going to be sent off to Hong-Kong.

MURIEL [*after a pause — commanding herself*]. When?

SOPHY. In about a fortnight.

MURIEL [*frigidly*]. Is this what you had to tell me, from him?

SOPHY. Yes, and that he must see you to-morrow, alone. I'll arrange it. Can you manage to be here at twelve?

MURIEL. I daresay, somehow.

SOPHY [*looking at her in surprise*]. I thought you'd be more upset.

MURIEL [*taking* SOPHY'S *hand*]. The truth is, Sophy — I'm glad.

SOPHY. Glad!

MURIEL. Awfully glad the chance has come of putting an end to all this. Oh, I've been treating him shockingly!

SOPHY. Him?

MURIEL. Lord Quex.

SOPHY [*impatiently*]. Oh! pooh!

MURIEL [*leaving* SOPHY]. Yes, after to-morrow he sha'n't find me looking a guilty fool whenever he speaks to me — by Jove, he sha'n't! I believe he guessed I haven't seen Moses in the Bulrushes!

SOPHY. But, dear, how do you know what Captain Bastling means to say to you to-morrow?

MURIEL [*pausing in her walk*]. To say? — good-by.

SOPHY. Suppose he asks you to put

him out of his misery — marry him directly, on the quiet?

Muriel [*a little unsteadily*]. Then I shall tell him finally — my word is given to Lord Quex.

Sophy [*coming to her again*]. Given! — wrung out of you. And just for that you'll lose the chance of being happy — all your life — with the man you ——

[*She turns away, and sits, on the right of the circular table, blowing her nose*]

Muriel [*at* Sophy's *side, desperately*]. But I tell you, Sophy, I love Lord Quex.

Sophy. You may *tell* me.

Muriel. I do — I mean, I'm getting to. [*Defiantly*] At any rate, I am proud of him.

Sophy. Proud!

Muriel. Certainly — proud that he has mended his ways for my sake.

Sophy [*between tears and anger*]. Mended his ways! with those eyes of his!

Muriel [*looking down upon* Sophy, *wonderingly*]. His eyes? why, they are considered his best feature.

Sophy. *I* never saw wickeder eyes. All my girls say the same.

Muriel [*with rising indignation*]. I am sure you have never detected Lord Quex looking at anybody in a way he should not.

Sophy. Oh, I admit he has always behaved in a gentlemanly manner toward me and my girls.

Muriel [*haughtily*]. Toward you and your ——! Sophy, pray remember Lord Quex's rank.

Sophy [*in hot scorn*]. His rank! ha! do you think his lordship has ever let *that* interfere ——?

[*She checks herself, finding* Muriel *staring at her*]

Muriel [*in horror*]. Sophy!

Sophy [*discomposed — rising*]. Er — if I'm to do anything to your nails ——

[*As* Sophy *is moving toward the manicure-table,* Muriel *intercepts her*]

Muriel. You are surely not suggesting that Lord Quex has ever descended ——?

Sophy [*hastily*]. No, no, no. [*Brushing past* Muriel *and seating herself before the screen-chair*] Come; they'll all be here directly.

Muriel [*sitting in the screen-chair*]. Sophy, you have heard some story ——

Sophy [*examining* Muriel's *hands*]. A little varnishing is all you need to-day.

Muriel. You shall tell me!

Sophy [*proceeding with her work methodically*]. It's nothing much; I'm sorry I ——

Muriel [*imperatively*]. Sophy!

Sophy [*reluctantly*]. Oh, well — well, when I was at Mr. Beaupoint's in Grosvenor Street ——

Muriel. Yes.

Sophy. A Lady Pumphrey came to stay there with a goodish-looking maid — Edith Smith her name was ——

Muriel. Never mind her name!

Sophy. And they'd lately met Lord Quex in a country-house in Worcestershire. Well, he had kissed *her* — Smith admitted it.

Muriel. Kissed whom — Lady Pumphrey?

Sophy. Oh, of course he'd kissed Lady Pumphrey; but he kissed Smith afterward, when he tipped her. She told me what he said.

Muriel. What did he say?

Sophy. He said, "There's a little something for yourself, my girl."

Muriel [*starting to her feet and walking away*]. My heavens! a Maid! what next am I to hear — his *blanchisseuse?* [*Sinking into a chair*] Oh! oh, dear!

Sophy [*turning in her chair to face* Muriel]. It's one thing I always meant to keep to myself.

Muriel [*bitterly*]. Still, I have promised to forgive him for so much already! And, after all, this occurred a long while ago.

Sophy [*thoughtfully*]. Ye—e—es. I suppose if you *did* find him up to anything of that sort now, you'd — what would you do?

Muriel. Do! [*With all her heart*] Marry Napier Bastling.

Sophy [*rising — a mischievous light in her eyes*]. Ah —! I almost wish it *would* happen!

Muriel. Sophy!

Sophy [*leaning against the edge of the circular table, gripping* Muriel's *hand*]. Just for your sake, darling. [*In a low voice*] I almost wish *I* could come across him in some quiet little shady spot ——

Muriel [*looking up at* Sophy, *horrified*]. What!

Sophy. In one of those greeny nooks you've told me of, at Fauncey Court. [*Between her teeth*] If he ever tried to

kiss *me*, and I told you of it, you'd take my word for it, wouldn't you?

MURIEL [*starting to her feet*]. For shame! how dare you let such an idea enter your head? you, a respectable girl, just engaged yourself ——!

SOPHY [*with a quick look toward the window*]. Oh, yes! hush! [*Clapping her hand to her mouth*] Oh, what would Valma say if he knew I'd talked in this style! [*The door-gong sounds*]

MURIEL. Here they are.

SOPHY [*as they hastily return to their chairs*]. Darling, I was only thinking of you and the poor Captain. [*With another glance toward the window*] Phew! if my Valma knew!

[*They resume their seats, and the manicuring is continued*]

[MISS LIMBIRD *enters, preceding* LORD QUEX *and the* COUNTESS OF OWBRIDGE, MRS. JACK EDEN, *and* FRAYNE. MISS MOON *follows.* LADY OWBRIDGE *is a very old lady in a mouse-coloured wig, with a pale, anxious face, watery eyes, and no eyebrows.* MRS. EDEN *is an ultra-fashionably-dressed woman of about thirty, shrill and maniéré*]

QUEX. [*To* LADY OWBRIDGE, *who is upon his arm*]. Yes, a curious phase of modern life. Many people come to these places for rest.

LADY OWBRIDGE [*looking about her shrinkingly*]. For rest, Henry?

QUEX. Certainly. I know a woman — I *knew* a woman who used to declare that her sole repose during the Season was the half-hour with the manicurist.

MRS. EDEN. How are you, Sophy?

SOPHY. How are you to-day, Mrs. Eden?

MRS. EDEN. Lady Owbridge, this is Miss Fullgarney, whom you've heard about.

[SOPHY *rises, makes a bob, and sits again*]

LADY OWBRIDGE [*seated*]. I hope you're quite well, my dear.

SOPHY [*busy over* MURIEL'S *nails*]. Thanks, my lady; I hope you're the same.

MRS. EDEN [*sitting*]. What is your opinion of the picture, Lady Owbridge?

LADY OWBRIDGE [*not hearing*]. Eh?

QUEX. Moses in the Bulrushes — what d'ye think of it?

LADY OWBRIDGE [*tearfully*]. They treat such subjects nowadays with too little reverence.

FRAYNE [*thoughtlessly*]. Too much Pharaoh's daughter and too little Moses.

QUEX [*frowning him down*]. Phsst!

MRS. EDEN. Certainly the handmaidens remind one of the young ladies in the ballet at the Empire.

LADY OWBRIDGE. The Empire?

MRS. EDEN [*checking herself*]. Oh ——!

QUEX. Popular place of entertainment.

LADY OWBRIDGE. Ah? The only place of that kind I have visited for some years is the Imperial Institute.

[MRS. EDEN *rises, laughing to herself, and joins* SOPHY *and* MURIEL. FRAYNE *is now establishing cordial relations between himself and* MISS MOON]

MRS. EDEN. [*To* SOPHY] Well, Sophy, and how's your business getting along?

LADY OWBRIDGE. [*To* QUEX, *after ascertaining that* FRAYNE *is not near her*] Oh, Henry, I have asked Sir Chichester to drive down to us to-night, to dine.

QUEX [*watching* FRAYNE *with apprehension*]. Ah, yes, delightful. [*Trying to gain* FRAYNE'S *attention — warningly*] Phsst! phsst!

LADY OWBRIDGE [*plucking at* QUEX'S *coat*] I feel that Sir Chichester is a very wholesome friend for you, Henry.

QUEX. Very. Phsst!

LADY OWBRIDGE. What is the name of the West African place? — Uumbos — Uumbos seems to have improved him vastly.

QUEX [*in a low voice*]. Chichester!

LADY OWBRIDGE. And it is our wish that you should associate for the future only with gray-haired men.

[MISS MOON *now withdraws, with* FRAYNE *at her heels*]

MURIEL [*rising and coming to* LADY OWBRIDGE]. I'm ready, dear Lady Owbridge. Look! you can see your face in them.

[LADY OWBRIDGE *rises;* MURIEL *displays her nails.* LADY OWBRIDGE *shakes her head gravely, while* QUEX *bends over* MURIEL'S *hands gallantly*]

MRS. EDEN. [*To* SOPHY] My hands need trimming-up desperately badly. That maid of mine is a fool at fingers.

SOPHY. Can't you stay now?

MRS. EDEN [*with an impatient movement of the head toward* LADY OWBRIDGE]. Oh, lord, no. [*Suddenly*] I say, I wish you'd run down to Richmond, to

Fauncey Court, and do me. Could you?

SOPHY [*innocently*]. Oh, yes.

MRS. EDEN. To-night, before dinner?

SOPHY. I think I can.

MRS. EDEN. [*To* LADY OWBRIDGE]. Lady Owbridge, Miss Fullgarney is coming down to Richmond this evening to manicure me. Do, do, do let her give your nails the fashionable cut. [*Going to* QUEX *and* MURIEL] Everybody is wearing pointed nails this Season.

LADY OWBRIDGE [*advancing to* SOPHY]. Ah, no, no. These practices are somewhat shocking to an old woman. [*To* SOPHY] But I don't blame you. [*Laying her hand upon* SOPHY'S *arm, kindly*] So you're Miss Eden's foster-sister, eh?

SOPHY. I've that honour, my lady.

LADY OWBRIDGE. You look a little thin. Come down to Fauncey Court to-day as soon as your duties will release you. Spend as many hours there as you can.

SOPHY. Oh, my lady!

LADY OWBRIDGE. Run about the grounds — go wherever you please; and get the air into your lungs. [*With gracious formality*] Remember, I invite you.

MURIEL [*innocently*]. How good of you, Lady Owbridge!

SOPHY. Thank you, my lady.

[FRAYNE *returns — accompanied by* MISS MOON, *who carries a neat package — and settles an account with* MISS LIMBIRD *at the desk*]

LADY OWBRIDGE. [*To* SOPHY] You shall be well looked after.

[*She shakes hands with* FRAYNE]

MURIEL [*kissing* SOPHY]. We shall meet by-and-by.

LADY OWBRIDGE. Muriel — young people ——

[MURIEL *joins* LADY OWBRIDGE; *they go out together*]

MRS. EDEN [*nodding to* SOPHY]. This evening, Sophy.

SOPHY [*in a flutter of simple pleasure*]. Yes, Mrs. Eden.

MRS. EDEN [*shaking hands with* FRAYNE]. Till dinner ——

[*She goes out*]

QUEX. [*To* SOPHY] Good-by, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY [*tripping across the room*]. Good-day, my lord.

QUEX [*joining* FRAYNE]. Are you coming, Chick?

FRAYNE [*taking the parcel from* MISS MOON — *and turning to* QUEX, *rather bitterly*]. I say, that gal has made me buy something I don't want. They stick you here frightfully ——

QUEX. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

[*They go out together*]

SOPHY [*adjusting her hair at the mirror*]. Come, girls! look alive! no more work for me to-day! I'm off home to change my frock. I've got an invite down to Richmond. My hat and coat!

[*The door-gong sounds.* MISS MOON *disappears at the door in the partition.* MISS HUDDLE *enters*]

SOPHY. Miss Hud-delle, please run next door, and ask Mr. Valma to step this way for a moment.

MISS HUDDLE. He's on the leads, Miss Fullgarney, smoking a cigarette.

SOPHY [*running across to the window*]. Get my bag of tools ready! sharp! [MISS HUDDLE *and* MISS LIMBIRD *go out;* SOPHY *opens the window and calls*] Valma! Valma! Valma!

[MISS MOON *returns with* SOPHY'S *hat, coat, gloves, and umbrella*]

MISS MOON. Your things, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY [*taking them from her*]. Send for a hansom — a smart one.

[MISS MOON *runs out as* VALMA *enters at the window*]

SOPHY [*breathlessly*]. Valma — Valma love! I've got an invite down to Richmond — Lady Owbridge — she's asked me specially! I'm going home to my place to smarten-up. Isn't it jolly? [*In an outburst*] Oh, love, you might give-up for to-day, and take me down!

VALMA. May I?

SOPHY. May you! Your hat — get your hat! you'll find me outside in a cab. [*He hurries away*]

[MISS LIMBIRD, *carrying a leather bag, enters, followed by* MISS CLARIDGE *and* MISS HUDDLE]

SOPHY [*as she, with the aid of her girls, pins on her hat and scrambles into her coat*]. You know, girls, many a silly person's head would be turned at being asked to a place like Fauncey Court — as a guest, bear in mind. But there, the houses I've been in! — it's nothing to me. Still, specially invited by the Countess of Owbridge herself — ! [*Putting her feet in turn upon a chair and hitching up her stockings*] I shall just make rather a favour of manicuring Mrs. Jack. One doesn't go visiting

to cut Mrs. Jack's claws. Gloves! Thank goodness, the evenings are long! they say it's simply heavenly at Fauncey Court — simply heaven —— [*She breaks off abruptly, staring straight before her. Under her breath*] Oh—! Fauncey Court — Lord Quex ——!

Miss Claridge. What's the matter, Miss Fullgarney?

Sophy. N—n—nothing.

Miss Moon [*entering*]. Cab, Miss Fullgarney!

Sophy [*in an altered voice*]. Bag. [*She takes her bag from* Miss Limbird *and walks away, rather slowly, with her head down. Quietly, without turning*] See you in the morning, girls.

The Four Girls. Good-afternoon, Miss Fullgarney. [Sophy *goes out*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT

ACT II

The scene represents a portion of an English garden laid out in Italian fashion. At the extreme back — upon ground slightly raised — two dense cypress hedges, about sixteen feet high, form an alley running from right to left. In the centre of the hedge which is nearer the spectator there is an opening, and at this opening are three or four steps connecting the higher with the lower level. Beyond the alley nothing is seen but the sky and some tree-tops. In advance is an enclosure formed by a dwarf cypress-hedge, about four feet in height, also broken in the centre by an opening, and running off right and left at a sharp angle. On the outside of the dwarf hedge is a walk; and beyond, on the right and left, are trees. Within the enclosure, on the left, is a small fountain; facing the fountain, on the right, a piece of old, broken sculpture. Other bits of antique sculpture are placed in different parts of the garden. In the foreground, on the right toward the centre, stands a stone bench, on the left of which is a table upon which are the remains of "afternoon tea," with a garden-chair. A similar stone bench stands opposite.

The light is that of a very fine evening.

[Lady Owbridge *is in the garden-chair asleep, an open book in her lap.* Quex *and* Muriel *stand, talking together, by the fountain. On the right-hand stone bench the* Duchess of Strood *and* Mrs. Eden *are seated. The* Duchess *is a daintily beautiful doll of about seven-and-thirty — a poseuse, outwardly dignified and stately when upon her guard, really a frail, shallow little creature full of extravagant sentimentality. Until* Lady Owbridge *wakes, the conversation is carried on in subdued tones*]

Mrs. Eden [*indicating* Muriel *and* Quex]. They make a fascinating couple, don't they, Duchess?

Duchess [*with placid melancholy*]. To see two people on the threshold of wedlock is always painfully interesting.

Mrs. Eden. I am quite triumphant about it. It is such a delightful engagement, now that the horrid difficulties are smoothed away.

Duchess. Yes, you were telling me of some sad obstacles ——

Mrs. Eden. I nearly perished of them! [*Very confidentially*] There's no doubt, you know, that his past *has* been exceptionally naughty.

Duchess. Really? Ah! don't be surprised that I am not more deeply shocked. In these surroundings it is hard to realize that every aspect of life is not as lovely as [*pointing to the foliage*] — the tones of those exquisite, deep greens, for example.

Mrs. Eden. However, the dear thing is going to be *so* good in the future. [*Turning to the* Duchess] I keep forgetting — Lord Quex is a very old friend of yours?

Duchess [*serenely*]. An acquaintance of many years' standing. But since his Grace has been an invalid we have lived much abroad, or in seclusion, and gossip has not reached us. Alas, you find me a ready subject *à désillusionner!* [*Rising*] We are in the sun. Shall we walk?

Mrs. Eden [*sympathetically, as they walk*]. Is his Grace still very unwell?

Duchess [*smiling sadly upon* Mrs. Eden]. He is still over seventy.

[*They wander away, through the trees, as* Quex *and* Muriel *leave the fountain*]

Quex [*with tender playfulness, first glancing at the sleeping* Lady Owbridge]. And so all these good things are to befall me after to-morrow?

MURIEL [*in a low voice*]. After to-morrow.

QUEX. When I approach, I shall no longer see you skim away into the far vista of these alleys, or shrink back into the shadows of the corridors [*prosaically*] — after to-morrow.

MURIEL. No — not after to-morrow.

QUEX. In place of a cold word, a chilling phrase, a warm one — after to-morrow.

MURIEL. I am going to try.

QUEX. If I touch your hand, you'll not slip it behind your back in a hurry [*touching her hand*] —?

MURIEL [*withdrawing it*]. Not after to-morrow.

[*She sits; he stands behind the stone bench, leaning over the back of it*]

QUEX. But why, may I ask, is this bliss reserved till after *to-morrow?*

MURIEL. I had rather you did *not* ask me, Quex.

QUEX. No? I see, I am a day too soon in putting even that little question.

MURIEL. Ah, I'll tell you this — I am going to turn over a new leaf, after to-morrow.

QUEX. You! your pages are all milk-white. What can you detect upon one of them to induce you to turn it?

MURIEL [*gazing into space*]. I — I've been scribbling there — scrawling — drawing pictures ——

QUEX. Pictures — of what?

MURIEL. You shall know, perhaps, some day.

QUEX. After to-morrow?

MURIEL. Yes, Quex, but — after many to-morrows.

[*Two men-servants — an old man and a young one — descend the steps and proceed to remove the tea-things*]

LADY OWBRIDGE [*waking*]. Eh —? [*Seeing* MURIEL *and* QUEX] Ah, my dears — ! I am reading such an absorbing book.

MURIEL [*by her side, taking the book*]. May I —?

LADY OWBRIDGE. You should study the Dean of St. Olpherts' sermons — and you, Henry.

QUEX [*taking the book from* MURIEL *and turning its pages*]. Yes, I must — I must ——

LADY OWBRIDGE. By the way, has anything been seen of that nice young manicure girl, Miss Sophy — something —?

MURIEL. Sophy Fullgarney — she arrived at about half-past four, and I asked Mrs. Gregory to show her over the house. I thought you would not object.

LADY OWBRIDGE. Object! it pleases me.

MURIEL. She is roving about the grounds now.

LADY OWBRIDGE. An exceedingly prepossessing young woman, of her class.

[*The servants have gone up the steps, carrying the tea-things*]

THE ELDER SERVANT [*looking down the alley toward the left*]. I see the young person, my lady.

LADY OWBRIDGE. I'll speak to her, Bristow.

[*The elder servant goes off toward the left; the younger one, bearing the tray, to the right. The* DUCHESS *and* MRS. EDEN *return, above the low cypress hedge;* QUEX *meets them*]

MURIEL. I would not have left her, but the young man she is engaged to brought her down, and I took it upon myself to give him permission to remain.

LADY OWBRIDGE. Oh, is Miss Fullgarney engaged?

MURIEL. To Mr. Valma, the palmist.

MRS. EDEN [*approaching*]. Valma, the palmist!

LADY OWBRIDGE. What is a palmist, pray?

MURIEL. He reads your past and your future in the lines of your hands. It's his profession, dear Lady Owbridge.

MRS. EDEN. Oh, do let us have him into the drawing-room after dinner! I hear he is simply charming.

LADY OWBRIDGE. Charming! [*Rising*] What are our ladies coming to! Dear, dear me! in my day such follies and superstitions were entirely restricted to the kitchen.

[MURIEL *joins the* DUCHESS. QUEX *is dutifully looking into the book of sermons. The servant returns, followed by* SOPHY, *and then retires;* SOPHY *comes forward, beamingly. She is prettily dressed, but in sober colors*]

SOPHY. [*To* LADY OWBRIDGE] Here I am, my lady. I'm having such a good time!

LADY OWBRIDGE. That's right.

SOPHY. Oh, this garden! they may well call it heavenly.

LADY OWBRIDGE. They ought not to call it that, my dear. But it is indeed full of earthly solace.

SOPHY. It must be. And what a place for a bicycle!

MURIEL [*reprovingly*]. Bicycles are not allowed to enter these grounds, Sophy.

SOPHY [*sobered*]. Oh —— !

LADY OWBRIDGE. Miss Eden tells me you are accompanied by the young man to whom you are engaged to be married.

SOPHY. I hope I haven't taken too great a liberty ——

LADY OWBRIDGE [*looking round*]. I don't see him.

SOPHY. He has run back to the station. I've just found out I left my bag in the fly that brought us here. So stupid of me!

LADY OWBRIDGE. Mrs. Gregory will give you, both, dinner.

SOPHY. Thank you, my lady.

[*The* DUCHESS *is now seated in the garden-chair. The younger of the two servants enters, carrying* SOPHY'S *bag and the evening papers*]

SERVANT [*handing the bag to* SOPHY]. The cabman has brought your bag back, miss.

SOPHY. There now! Much obliged. [*To* MRS. EDEN] Poor Mr. Valma will have his tramp for nothing, won't he?

[SOPHY *and* MRS. EDEN *talk together*]

LADY OWBRIDGE. The evening papers, Morgan?

SERVANT [*who has laid the papers upon the table*]. Yes, my lady.

[*The servant retires*]

LADY OWBRIDGE. So late? we must go in and dress.

DUCHESS [*who has been occupied in observing* QUEX]. I'll follow you, dear Lady Owbridge.

[LADY OWBRIDGE *moves away and is joined by* MRS. EDEN]

MRS. EDEN [*as she ascends the steps with* LADY OWBRIDGE]. Sophy, I shall be ready for you in a quarter of an hour.

SOPHY. All right, Mrs. Eden.

[LADY OWBRIDGE *and* MRS. EDEN *disappear*]

MURIEL [*crossing to* SOPHY]. Wouldn't you like to walk to the gates to meet Mr. Valma?

SOPHY. Thanks, dear, I think I would.

MURIEL. I can show you a nearer way than by going back to the house. [*Pointing into the distance*] Follow this hedge and take the second alley — not the first — on your left. When you reach the big fountain ——

[QUEX, *still dipping into the sermons, has come down to the back of the table. He now throws the book upon the table and picks up a newspaper*]

QUEX. I beg your pardon, Duchess — I didn't see you.

DUCHESS [*in a whisper*]. Harry ——

QUEX [*startled*]. Eh?

DUCHESS. I will hurry into my gown and return. Be here in a quarter of an hour.

QUEX. May I ask — the reason?

DUCHESS [*a newspaper in her hand — talking to him, in undertones, over the top of it*]. For a week, only the merest commonplaces have passed between us. I must relieve my heart; it is bursting!

QUEX. I entreat you to consider my position.

DUCHESS. Yours! have *I* no reputation to endanger? [*Rising — laying the paper aside*] What a pitiably small request! you will grant it?

QUEX. If you could see your way to excuse me ——

DUCHESS. In memory of the past — ! I demand it!

QUEX [*with a stiff bow*]. Oh — oh, certainly.

DUCHESS [*leaving him*]. Thank you.

QUEX. [*To himself*] Damn!

[*He turns on his heel and walks away*]

DUCHESS [*joining* MURIEL]. You are coming to dress?

MURIEL [*after smiling assent, presenting* SOPHY]. Miss Fullgarney was my first playmate, Duchess.

DUCHESS [*looking upon* SOPHY *graciously*]. Ah? [*To* MURIEL] The souvenirs of childhood are sweet, are they not?

[*She slips her arm through* MURIEL'S, *and they ascend the steps and go away together.* SOPHY *comes to the stone bench on the left, upon which she deposits her bag. She opens the bag, produces a little mirror and a comb, and puts her "fringe" in order — humming as she does so an air from the latest comic opera. Then she returns the comb and mirror to the bag, and — bag in*

hand — prepares to depart. While this is going on Quex *returns, above the low hedge. He ascends the steps and looks off into the distance, watching the retreating figure of the* Duchess. *After a moment or two he shrugs his shoulders in a perplexed, troubled way, and, coming down the steps, encounters* Sophy]

Sophy [*innocently*]. Lovely evening, my lord.

Quex [*passing her, with a nod and a smile*]. Very — very.

[*At the table, he exchanges the newspaper he carries for another. She is going in the direction indicated by* Muriel. *Suddenly she pauses, above the dwarf cypress hedge, and stands looking at* Quex *with an expression in which fear and determination are mingled. Having selected his newspaper,* Quex *crosses to the left and sits, reading*]

Sophy [*coming to him*]. I don't think I shall go, after all.

Quex [*lowering his paper*]. Eh?

Sophy. I was just starting off down to the gates, you know, to meet Mr. Valma.

Quex [*with amiable indifference*]. Oh?

Sophy [*her head upon one side, smiling*]. But it's too hot for walking, isn't it?

Quex [*resuming his reading*]. It is warm.

Sophy [*putting her bag upon the table and removing her gloves*]. Phew!

[*She eyes him askance, undecided as to a plan of action. He lowers his paper again, disconcerting her*]

Quex. You don't feel you *ought* to go and meet your — Mr. Valma?

Sophy [*edging toward him*]. I might miss him — mightn't I?

Quex. Certainly — you might.

Sophy. Besides, it wouldn't do for me to attend upon Mrs. Jack — Mrs. Eden — all puffing and towzelled; [*archly*] now, would it?

Quex [*resuming his reading*]. You're the best judge.

Sophy. So I've a quarter of an hour to fill in somehow. [*A pause*] I've a quarter of an hour to fill in somehow.

Quex [*behind his paper, beginning to be extremely bored.*] Indeed?

Sophy [*quaking*]. I — I wish there were some quiet little shady places to ramble about in, here at Fauncey Court.

Quex. There are several.

Sophy. Are there? . . . are there?

Quex [*turning his paper*]. Oh, yes, a great many.

Sophy. You see, I'm a stranger ——

Quex [*kindly*]. Well, you run along; you'll find 'em. [*She walks away slowly, baffled. He glances at her over his paper, slightly puzzled*] Have you seen the grotto?

Sophy [*turning sharply*]. No.

Quex [*pointing toward the right*]. It's in that direction.

Sophy. Grotto? Dark, I suppose, and lonelyish?

Quex. You said you desired shade and quiet.

Sophy. Yes, but not darkness. Fancy me in a grotto all by myself . . . by myself . . . !

Quex [*behind his paper again*]. I'm afraid I have no further suggestion to offer.

[*There is another pause; then her face lights up, and she comes down to him swiftly*]

Sophy [*close to him*]. Show me your nails, my lord.

Quex [*lowering his paper*]. My nails?

Sophy [*taking his hand and examining it*]. Excuse me. Oh, my lord, for shame!

Quex. You take exception to them?

Sophy. This is hacking, not cutting. You ought never to be allowed within a mile of a pair of scissors.

Quex [*looking at his other hand*]. Oh, come! they're hardly as bad as all that.

Sophy [*examining that hand also*]. Ha, ha, ha!

Quex [*rising, somewhat abashed*]. Ha! I confess I am a little unskilful at such operations.

Sophy. No gentleman should trust to himself where his nails are concerned. Why, a man's hand has lost him a young lady's affections before this! I've heard of heaps of cases where matches have been broken off ——

Quex [*putting his hands behind him, smiling*]. Really? the results of manicuring are more far-reaching than I had imagined.

Sophy. You see, my lord, when a man's courting he is free to look his young lady in the face for as long as he chooses; it's considered proper and attentive. But the girl is expected to

drop *her* eyes, and then — what has *she* to look at? Why, a well-trimmed hand or an ugly one. [*Taking off her rings*] Now then, I'll do wonders for you in ten minutes.

QUEX. Thank you; I am not going indoors just yet.

SOPHY. No need to go indoors. [*Depositing her rings upon the table and opening her bag*] I've got my bag here, with all my tools — see!

QUEX. Ah, but I won't trouble you this evening. Another occasion ——

SOPHY [*arranging her manicure instruments, etc., upon the table*]. No trouble at all, my lord — quite an honour. [*Indicating the stone bench*] Please sit down there. [*Producing a little brass bowl*] Water ——?

[*She runs to the fountain and fills her bowl from its basin*]

QUEX [*crossing, hesitatingly, to the right — looking at his nails and speaking in a formal manner*]. You have been bidden to Fauncey Court for rest and relaxation, Miss Fullgarney; it is most obliging of you to allow your pleasure to be disturbed in this way.

SOPHY [*returning to him*]. Oh, don't say that, my lord. [*Putting the bowl on the table and dragging the garden-chair forward to face him*] Business *is* a pleasure, sometimes.

[*Her close proximity to him forces him back upon the bench*]

QUEX [*seated — stiffly*]. You must, at least, let me open an account at your excellent establishment.

SOPHY. Not I. [*Seated — taking his right hand*] One may work occasionally for love, I should hope? [*archly*] ha, ha! just for love, eh?

QUEX [*uncomfortably*]. No, no, I couldn't permit it — I couldn't permit it.

SOPHY [*holding his hand almost caressingly*]. Well, well! we'll see — we'll see. [*She clips his nails briskly and methodically. While she does so she again hums a song, looking up at him at intervals enticingly, under her lashes. Breaking off in her song*] My goodness! what a smooth, young hand you have!

QUEX [*his discomfort increasing*]. Er — indeed?

SOPHY. Many a man of six-and-twenty would be glad to own such hands, I can tell you. [*Patting his hand reprovingly*] Keep still! [*It is now his turn to hum a song, which he does, under his breath, to disguise his embarrassment. She looks up at him*] But, then, you're an awfully young man for your age, in every way, aren't you?

QUEX [*gazing at the sky*]. Oh, I don't know about that.

SOPHY [*slyly*]. You *do* know. [*Wagging her head at him*] You *do* know.

QUEX [*relaxing slightly*]. It may be so, of course, without one's being conscious of it.

SOPHY. *May* be so! ah, ha! not conscious of it! ho! [*Slapping his hand again, soundly*] Artful!

QUEX [*flattered and amused*]. No, no, I assure you! ha, ha!

[*They laugh together. His constraint gradually diminishes. After shaking some liquid soap from a bottle into the bowl, she places the bowl beside him on the bench*]

SOPHY [*while doing this*]. My young ladies at a-hundred-and-eighty-five all agree with me about you.

QUEX. Do they?

SOPHY. Yes, do they!

QUEX. Your young ladies?

SOPHY. My girls.

QUEX. Ha, ha, ha! And what terrible pronouncement has a-hundred-and-eighty-five to pass upon me?

SOPHY. Seven-and-thirty, *you* look — not a day older; that's what *we* say. There, dip your fingers in that, do!

QUEX. Into this?

SOPHY [*thrusting his fingers into the bowl*]. Baby! [*The water splashes over her dress and his coat*] Oh!

QUEX. I beg your pardon.

SOPHY. Now what have you done? [*Wiping the water from his coat*] You clumsy boy!

QUEX. Thanks, thanks.

[*She commences operations upon his left hand. He is now thoroughly entertained by her freedom and audacity*]

SOPHY. Ha, ha! do you know what *I* maintain?

QUEX [*laughing*]. Upon my word, I dread to think.

SOPHY. Why, that every man who looks younger than his years should be watched by the police.

QUEX. Good heavens, Sophy — Miss Fullgarney!

SOPHY. Yes — as a dangerous person.

QUEX. Dangerous! ho, come!

SOPHY [*with the suggestion of a wink*]. Dangerous. The man who is younger

than he ought to be is always no better than he should be.

QUEX. Ha, ha, ha!

SOPHY. Am I right? am I right, eh? [*Putting her cheek near his lips — speaking in a low voice, breathlessly, her eyes averted*] Tell me whether I'm right, my lord.

[*For the first time, a suspicion of her designs crosses his mind. He draws back slowly, eying her. There is a pause*]

QUEX [*in an altered tone, but keeping her in play*]. Ha, ha, ha, ha! [*Looking at his watch*] I — I am afraid I shall have to run away to dress for dinner very soon.

SOPHY [*resuming her work, disappointed*]. Not yet; you've plenty of time. But there, dangerous or not dangerous, in my heart I can't help holding with what my lady-customers are continually saying.

QUEX [*watching her keenly*]. No? and what are your lady-customers continually saying?

SOPHY. Why, that the young fellows of the day are such conceited, apish creatures; no man under forty-five is worth wasting a minute's time over.

QUEX. Ho! they say that, your lady-customers?

SOPHY. Yes; and they're good judges, they are.

QUEX. Good judges! none better — none better.

SOPHY [*laying her clipper aside suddenly, and putting her hand to her eyes with a cry of pain*]. Oh!

QUEX [*coolly*]. What's the matter?

SOPHY [*rising*]. A little splinter has flown into my eye. It often happens.

QUEX [*rising*]. Extremely painful, I expect?

SOPHY [*producing her handkerchief*]. Very. [*Giving him her handkerchief*] Do you think you could find it?

QUEX. Certainly, if it's to be found.

SOPHY [*holding the lapels of his coat, her head almost upon his shoulder, her eyes closed*]. Ah! please make haste and look for it!

QUEX. Right or left?

SOPHY. The ri — the left.

QUEX [*sharply*]. Raise your head. Stand up.

SOPHY [*releasing his coat and raising her head*]. Eh?

QUEX [*sternly*]. Open your eyes. Both of them. [*She opens her eyes and stares at him. He returns her handkerchief*] There! I have removed the splinter. [*She slowly backs away like a whipped child. He follows her*] Miss Fullgarney, I understand you are engaged to be married — to this young man, Valma?

SOPHY [*tremblingly*]. Yes, my lord.

QUEX. Do you care for him?

SOPHY [*faintly*]. Yes.

QUEX. In love with him?

SOPHY. Oh, yes, my lord, indeed.

QUEX. And yet you still flirt?

SOPHY. Y—es.

QUEX. Take my advice — be satisfied with the kisses your sweetheart gives you. Don't try to get them from other men, old or young.

SOPHY. No — no ——

QUEX [*sternly, but kindly*]. You little fool!

[POLLITT *enters, wearing a tall hat and lemon-colored gloves*]

POLLITT [*jealously*]. Sophy!

[QUEX *walks away*]

SOPHY [*falteringly*]. The fly-man brought back the bag, Valma dear.

POLLITT. I am aware of that. [*Lowering his voice*] What are you doing here with Lord Quex?

SOPHY. I — I've been manicuring him.

[*The* YOUNGER SERVANT *comes down the steps*]

SERVANT. [*To* SOPHY] Mrs. Eden is quite ready for you, miss.

[*She hurriedly replaces her manicure instruments, etc., in the bag, hands the bowl to the* SERVANT, *and, without looking at* POLLITT *or* QUEX, *goes swiftly up the steps and disappears. The* SERVANT *follows her, carrying the bowl*]

POLLITT. [*To* QUEX] Excuse me, my lord ——

QUEX [*coming forward, and picking up his newspaper*]. Eh?

POLLITT. That young lady and I are engaged to be married.

QUEX. Mr. — Valma?

POLLITT. Yes, my lord. [*Hotly*] And I very much object to her manicuring gentlemen.

QUEX [*dryly*]. Well, there you have a little something to discuss at home — before, and, perhaps, after marriage.

POLLITT. I consider the custom of ladies manicuring gentlemen one that

may occasionally lead to undue familiarity, my lord.

QUEX. I am inclined to agree with you, sir.

POLLITT. And I shall do all I can to persuade Miss Fullgarney to relinquish active participation in the business.

QUEX. The palmistry profession is a flourishing one at present, eh, Mr. Valma?

POLLITT [*loftily*]. My engagement-book is always full. I have disappointed several ladies by coming here this afternoon.

QUEX. Poor women! Nevertheless, pray be careful how you slight the manicure trade. Crazes die, you know — nails grow.

POLLITT [*tapping his breast*]. I think *we* have come to stay, my lord.

QUEX [*lightly*]. Well, you're sailing pretty close to the wind, remember, you fellows.

POLLITT. My lord!

QUEX [*replacing his newspaper upon the table*]. And if some day you should find yourselves in the police-court, alongside a poor old woman whose hand has been crossed with a threepenny-bit down an area ——

[*The* DUCHESS *appears on the further side of the low cypress hedge. She is dressed for dinner. The sky is now faintly rosy, and during the ensuing scene it deepens into a rich sunset*]

QUEX. We are going to have a flaming sunset, Duchess.

DUCHESS. Superb.

POLLITT [*haughtily*]. I wish you good-evening, my lord.

QUEX. Oh, good-evening, Mr. Valma. [*To himself*] Impudent beggar!

[POLLITT *walks away. After watching his going, the* DUCHESS *comes eagerly forward*]

DUCHESS [*her hand upon her heart*]. Oh! I am here, Harry!

QUEX [*in delicate protest*]. Ah, my dear Duchess!

DUCHESS. Fortunately I have been able to dress quickly without exciting curiosity. My maid was summoned away this afternoon, to her father who is sick. [*Sinking on to the bench*] Still, these risks are considerable enough.

QUEX. And yet you deliberately court them!

DUCHESS. Great passions involve great dangers. The history of the world shows that.

QUEX. But why now — now that circumstances are altered between us? why, on earth, do you play these hazardous tricks now?

DUCHESS. I was determined to meet, to know, the girl with whom you are about to *ranger* yourself, Harry.

QUEX. Even that could have been arrived at in some safer way.

DUCHESS. Ah, but you fail to see; it was the daring of this proceeding that attracted me — the romance of it!

QUEX [*raising his hands*]. Romance! still!

DUCHESS. Always. It is the very blood in my veins. It keeps me young. I shall die a romantic girl, however old I may be.

QUEX. You ought, you really ought, to have flourished in the Middle Ages.

DUCHESS. You have frequently made that observation. [*Rising*] I do live in the Middle Ages, in my imagination. I live in every age in which Love was not a cool, level emotion, but a fierce, all-conquering flame — a flame that grew in the heart of a woman, that of a sudden spread through her whole organism, that lit up her eyes with a light more refulgent than the light of sun or moon! [*Laying her hand upon his arm*] Oh, oh, this poor, thin, modern sentiment miscalled Love ——!

QUEX [*edging away*]. Sssh! pray be careful!

DUCHESS. Ah, yes. But, dear Harry, I cannot endure the ordeal any longer.

QUEX. The ordeal?

DUCHESS. The prolonged discomfort, to which I have subjected myself, of watching your wooing of Miss Eden. I must go.

QUEX [*with ill-concealed relief*]. Go! leave us?

DUCHESS. I recognize how fitting it is that you should bring your wild, irregular career to a close; but after to-morrow I shall cease to be a spectator of these preliminaries.

QUEX [*his eyes sparkling*]. After to-morrow!

DUCHESS. Yes, I rejoin poor dear Strood on Friday. True, he has four nurses — he always had four nurses, if you remember?

QUEX [*sympathetically*]. Three or four.

DUCHESS. But then, nurses are but nurses. [*Nobly*] I must not forget that I am a wife, Harry.

QUEX. No, no — you mustn't forget that.

DUCHESS [*gazing into his eyes*]. And so, between you and me [*placing her hands upon his shoulders*], it is over.

QUEX [*promptly*]. Over.

DUCHESS. Finally, irrevocably over.

QUEX [*freeing himself*]. Absolutely over. [*Taking her hand and bowing over it solemnly*] Done with.

[*He walks away*]

DUCHESS [*moving slowly*]. That is — almost over.

QUEX [*turning sharply*]. Almost?

DUCHESS. We have yet to say good-by, you know.

QUEX [*returning to her, apprehensively*]. We — we have said good-by.

DUCHESS. Ah, no, no!

QUEX [*again bowing over her hand — with simulated feeling*]. Good-by.

DUCHESS [*looking round*]. What! *here?*

QUEX [*humouring her*]. This romantic old garden! [*pointing to the statuary*] these silent witnesses — beholders, it is likely, of many similar scenes! the — the — setting sun! Could any situation be more appropriate?

DUCHESS. But we are liable to be interrupted at any moment. The joint romance of our lives, Harry, ought not to end with a curt word and formal hand-shake in an exposed spot of this kind. [*Sitting in the garden-chair*] Oh, it cannot, must not, end so!

QUEX [*eying her uneasily*]. Frankly, I see nothing else for it.

DUCHESS. I can't credit it. Why, what was the second reason for my coming here?

QUEX. Second reason?

DUCHESS. That our parting might be in keeping with our great attachment!

QUEX. Impossible.

DUCHESS. Impracticable?

QUEX. In every way, impossible.

DUCHESS [*taking his hand*]. Oh, don't say that, dear Harry! Ah, the auguries tell me that what I ask will be.

QUEX [*omitting, in his anxiety, to withdraw his hand*]. The auguries?

DUCHESS. Fate — coincidence — call it what you please — foreshadows one more meeting between us.

QUEX. Coincidence?

DUCHESS [*intensely, in a low voice*]. Harry, do you remember a particular evening at Stockholm?

QUEX [*hastily*]. Stockholm?

DUCHESS. That evening upon which we discovered how much our society meant to each other!

QUEX [*vaguely, while he hastily recovers possession of his hand*]. At Stockholm was it ——?

DUCHESS. You were sailing with us in the Baltic — you must recollect? Our yacht had put in at Stockholm: we had come to the Grand Hotel. Strood had retired, and you and I were sitting out upon the balcony watching the lights of the café on the Norrbro and the tiny steamboats that stole to and fro across the harbor. Surely you recollect?

QUEX. Yes, yes, of course.

DUCHESS. Well, do you remember the brand of the champagne you sipped while you and I sat smoking?

QUEX. Good Lord, no!

DUCHESS. "Félix Poubelle, Carte d'Or." You remarked that it was a brand unknown to you. Have you ever met it since, Harry?

QUEX. Not that I ——

DUCHESS. Nor I till last night, at dinner. [*Impressively*] It is in this very house.

QUEX [*with a slight shrug of the shoulders*]. Extremely probable.

DUCHESS. And do you remember how I was clad, that evening at Stockholm?

QUEX. I am afraid I don't.

DUCHESS. *Couleur de rose garnie de vert.* I have just such another garment with me.

QUEX. Really?

DUCHESS. Do you remember in what month we were at Stockholm?

QUEX. No.

DUCHESS. June — this month. Nor the day of the week?

QUEX. It must be ten years ago!

DUCHESS. Wednesday. There stands the record in my diary.

QUEX. Diary! good heavens, you are not so indiscreet ——!

DUCHESS. No, no — only the words, "warm evening." Yes, it was upon a Wednesday. What is to-day?

QUEX. Wednesday.

DUCHESS [*rising*]. Harry, I want to see you sipping that brand of champagne once more, while you and I sit facing one another, silently, dreamily smoking Argyropulos.

QUEX [*negatively*]. Duchess ——

DUCHESS. To end as we began! you have not the heart to refuse?

QUEX. I ——

DUCHESS. You do refuse?

QUEX. I do.

[*She passes him, and again sinks upon the bench*]

DUCHESS [*her back toward him, her shoulders heaving*]. Oh! oh!

QUEX. I — I am profoundly sorry to be obliged to speak to you in this fashion.

DUCHESS. Oh, then I cannot go on Friday!

QUEX. Not!

DUCHESS. No! no! no!

QUEX. Believe me, it would be better for you, for me, for everybody ——

DUCHESS. I cannot! [*Producing a diminutive lace handkerchief*] In the first shock of the news of your engagement — for it was a shock — one thought consoled me; throughout the time that has elapsed since then I have fed upon this same thought — there will be a parting in keeping with our great attachment! And now, you would rob me even of that!

QUEX. But — but — but — a solemn, deliberate leave-taking! the ceremony, of all others, to be carefully avoided!

DUCHESS. Not by me, Harry — not by me. I wish to carry, in my breast, from this house the numb despair of a piteous climax. I cannot drive away smugly from these gates with the simple feelings of a woman who has been paying a mere visit — I cannot!

QUEX. My dear Sidonia ——!

DUCHESS [*decidedly*]. I say I cannot!

QUEX. [*To himself, with a little groan*]. Oh! Phew!

[*He walks to and fro impatiently, reflecting.* SOPHY, *without her hat, comes quickly down the steps as if making for the table. Seeing* QUEX *and the* DUCHESS, *she draws back inquisitively*]

QUEX [*by the* DUCHESS'S *side again, helplessly*]. Well, I — ha! — I ——

DUCHESS [*rising eagerly, laying a hand upon his arm*]. You *will?*

[SOPHY *stoops down behind the dwarf cypress hedge*]

QUEX. You are certain — certain that this would effectually remove the obstacle to your rejoining — [*with a wave of the hand*] on Friday?

DUCHESS. Why, do you think I would risk an anticlimax? [*In an intense whisper*] To-night! [*Louder*] To-night? [*He hesitates a little longer — then bows in assent, stiffly and coldly. She gives an ardent sigh*] Ah ——! [*He retreats a step or two. She draws herself up with dignity*] To-night then ——

[*She turns from him and glides away through the trees. He stands for a moment, a frown upon his face, in thought*]

QUEX [*suddenly, moving in the direction she has taken*] No, no! Duchess ——! [*A gong sounds in the distance. He pauses, looking at his watch, angrily*] Ptshah! [*He turns up the stage and discovers* SOPHY, *who is now standing behind the hedge*] Hallo! [SOPHY *advances, laughing rather foolishly*] What are you doing here?

SOPHY. Looking for my rings. I took them off before I began manicuring you.

QUEX [*pointing to the hedge*]. You didn't drop them there, did you?

SOPHY. No, I left them on the table.

QUEX [*looking toward the table*]. *There's* the table.

SOPHY [*coming to the table and putting on her rings*]. Yes, I know.

QUEX [*after a short pause*]. How long have you been here?

SOPHY. I? Oh, I'd just come as you spoke to me.

QUEX [*half-satisfied*]. Oh ——?

[*He goes up the steps, gives her a parting look, and disappears. It is now twilight.* MRS. EDEN, FRAYNE, *and* MURIEL — *all dressed for dinner — appear on the side of the low hedge*]

MRS. EDEN. [*To* FRAYNE, *walking with him above the hedge*] Delightful, isn't it? It was planted by the late Lord Owbridge's father a hundred years ago.

FRAYNE [*seeing* SOPHY]. Why, isn't that the young manicure lady?

MRS. EDEN. Yes. All these pieces of sculpture are genuine old Italian. This quaint little fountain came from the Villa Marchotti ——

FRAYNE [*edging toward* SOPHY]. Alluring.

MRS. EDEN. This is the fountain.

FRAYNE [*returning to her*]. Quaint old fountain.

SOPHY. [*To* MURIEL, *across the hedge in a whisper*] Darling!

MRS. EDEN [*looking into the distance*]. I think I see the dear Duchess.

FRAYNE [*alertly*]. Where?

MRS. EDEN. There.

FRAYNE. I have the honour of knowing her Grace slightly.

MRS. EDEN [*moving away*]. What a sweet woman!

FRAYNE [*following her*]. Alluring!

[*They disappear through the trees as* MURIEL, *coming from below the hedge, joins* SOPHY]

SOPHY. Darling!

MURIEL. What is it, Sophy?

SOPHY. Lord Quex and this — this Duchess — they know each other very well, of course?

MURIEL. They are old acquaintances, I understand.

SOPHY. Ah!

MURIEL. Why do you ask?

SOPHY. I've just seen them together, talking.

MURIEL. Talking? why not?

SOPHY. Yes, but how?

MURIEL. How?

SOPHY. I'll tell you. After you went indoors to dress, I took off my rings and put them on that table. [*Looking away rather guiltily*] Rings fidget me, this hot weather — don't they you? Well, just as I'd finished with Mrs. Jack, it suddenly struck me — my rings! — and I hurried back to fetch them. When I got here, I came across Lord Quex and the Duchess.

MURIEL [*calmly*]. Yes?

SOPHY. I stooped down behind that hedge there.

MURIEL. You did not!

SOPHY. Oh, I suppose you consider it mean!

MURIEL. Despicable!

SOPHY. Despicable, is it! I don't care! My goodness, I'd do the shabbiest thing a woman could do to save you from him!

MURIEL [*peering among the trees*]. Hush, hush, hush!

SOPHY [*on the verge of tears*]. Perhaps you fancy I'm mean from choice? Perhaps you imagine ——?

MURIEL. Be quiet, Sophy!

SOPHY [*giving a sniff and lowering her voice*]. Well, here they were, standing exactly where you are, close to each other. [MURIEL *changes her position*] I saw her touch his arm. Oh, I'm positive there's something between those two! "You will?" I heard her say. And then he made a remark about Friday — Friday ——

MURIEL. The Duchess goes on Friday.

SOPHY. That was it, of course! And then she mumbled something I couldn't catch; and then — listen to this! — then she said "to-night," quite plainly. *To-night!* and in such a tone of voice! And then he bowed, and out she came with "to-night" again — "to-night," for the second time — and away she went. Now, what do you think that "to-night" of hers means?

MURIEL [*coldly, seating herself upon the bench*]. Nothing — anything.

SOPHY. Nothing!

MURIEL. A hundred topics of conversation would lead to such an expression. [*Looking at* SOPHY *steadily*] You are mistaken in the construction you put upon it.

SOPHY [*quietly*]. Mistaken, am I?

MURIEL [*with clenched hands*]. The Duchess of Strood is a most immaculate woman. [*Suddenly*] Oh, it would be too infamous!

[*The* DUCHESS *and* FRAYNE, *followed by* MRS. EDEN, *reappear behind the low hedge.* SOPHY *retreats to the back of the bench upon which* MURIEL *is sitting. The* DUCHESS *and* FRAYNE *approach, talking, while* MRS. EDEN *chats to* SOPHY *across the hedge*]

FRAYNE. [*To the* DUCHESS, *gallantly*]. I am flattered by your remembrance of me, Duchess. When we last met I had hardly a gray hair in my head. [*Running his hand through his hair*] Ha! The West Coast ——!

DUCHESS. Is the climate so terrible?

FRAYNE. Deadly. But the worst of it is [*with a bow and a sigh*], we have no European ladies.

[MURIEL — *eying the* DUCHESS — *rises, shrinkingly, and steals away*]

FRAYNE [*looking after* MURIEL]. Quex! ha, there's a lucky dog, now!

DUCHESS [*sweetly*]. You are delighted, naturally, at your old friend's approaching marriage?

FRAYNE [*kissing his finger-tips toward the left*]. Miss Eden —! [*Inquisitively*] And — and *you*, Duchess?

DUCHESS [*raising her eyebrows*]. I?

FRAYNE. You also approve his choice?

DUCHESS [*blandly*]. Approve? I am scarcely sufficiently intimate with either party to express approval or disapproval.

FRAYNE [*eying her askance*]. Pardon.

I thought you had known Quex for — ah — some years.

DUCHESS. Quite superficially. I should describe him rather as a great friend of his Grace.

[LADY OWBRIDGE *appears on the top of the steps*]

LADY OWBRIDGE. Are you here, Duchess?

DUCHESS [*turning to her*]. Yes.

LADY OWBRIDGE [*coming down the steps*]. Oh, I am really very upset!

DUCHESS. Upset?

LADY OWBRIDGE. About your maid. The circumstance has only just been reported to me — you have lost your maid. [*Seeing* FRAYNE] Is that Sir Chichester? [FRAYNE *advances and shakes hands*] I didn't observe you, in the dusk. Have you seen Henry? I wonder if he is waiting for us in the drawing-room?

FRAYNE. May I go and hunt for him?

LADY OWBRIDGE. It would be kind of you.

[FRAYNE *goes up the steps and away.* MRS. EDEN *comes to the stone bench.* MURIEL *returns slowly, coming from among the trees and appearing on the further side of the low hedge*]

DUCHESS. [*To* LADY OWBRIDGE] Pray don't be in the least concerned for me, dear Lady Owbridge; the absence of my maid is quite a temporary matter. Poor Watson's father is unwell and I packed her off to him this afternoon. She will be back by mid-day to-morrow, she promises me.

LADY OWBRIDGE. But, dear me! in the meantime my own woman shall wait upon you.

DUCHESS. I couldn't dream of it.

MRS. EDEN. Why not my Gilchrist — or let us share her?

DUCHESS. No, no; the housemaid who assisted me into this gown ——

LADY OWBRIDGE. Chalmers? well, there's Chalmers, certainly. But I fear that Chalmers has hot hands. Or Denham — no, Denham is suffering from a bad knee. Of course, there's Bruce! Bruce is painfully near-sighted — but would Bruce do? Or little Atkins ——?

SOPHY [*stepping from behind the bench, and confronting* LADY OWBRIDGE — *in a quiet voice*]. Or I, my lady?

LADY OWBRIDGE. You, my dear?

SOPHY. Why shouldn't *I* attend upon her Grace to-night and in the morning? [*With half a courtesy to the* DUCHESS] I should dearly like to have the honour.

[MURIEL *comes forward, staring at* SOPHY]

MRS. EDEN. Now, that's very proper and good-natured of you, Sophy.

LADY OWBRIDGE. But, Miss Fullgarney ——

SOPHY [*modestly*]. Oh, I never feel like Miss Fullgarney out of my business, my lady. You see, I was maid for years, and it's second nature to me. Do let me, my lady — do, your Grace!

MRS. EDEN. Duchess ——?

DUCHESS [*hesitatingly*]. Oh — oh, by all means. [*To* SOPHY] Thank you.

[*The gong sounds in the distance again, as* QUEX — *now in evening-dress — and* FRAYNE *return together, above the hedge*]

LADY OWBRIDGE. Here is Quex.

[*The ladies, except* MURIEL, *join* FRAYNE *and* QUEX]

MURIEL. [*To* SOPHY] What are you doing?

SOPHY [*breathlessly*]. The housekeeper showed me over the house. I remember — her maid's room is at the end of a passage leading from the boudoir!

MURIEL. Sophy, you must not! you sha'n't!

SOPHY. Why, isn't it for the best? If I was mistaken over what I heard just now, I sha'n't see or hear anything wicked to-night; and that will satisfy both of us ——!

LADY OWBRIDGE [*calling*]. Muriel——

[MURIEL *joins the group;* SOPHY *slips away and disappears*]

LADY OWBRIDGE. [*To the* DUCHESS] Shall we go in?

[LADY OWBRIDGE *and the* DUCHESS, *and* MRS. EDEN *and* MURIEL, *ascend the steps and go toward the house. Instead of following the ladies,* QUEX *turns sharply and comes forward with an angry, sullen look upon his face*]

FRAYNE [*looking round for* QUEX]. Hallo, Harry! [*Coming to* QUEX] Aren't you ——?

QUEX. Hang dinner! I don't want to eat.

FRAYNE. Anything wrong, old man? anything I ——?

QUEX [*shaking himself up*]. No, no; nothing — the hot weather. Come along; we mustn't be late for grace. [*Boisterously*] At any rate, a glass of champagne — [*slapping* FRAYNE *on the back*] a glass or two of Félix Poubelle, hey? Félix Poubelle, Carte d'Or! ha, ha, ha!

[*As they turn to go, they see* SOPHY *on the other side of the low hedge, looking at them steadily*]

QUEX. [*To* FRAYNE, *quietly*] Wait!

[*They stand still, while* SOPHY *very demurely walks to the steps, ascends them, and disappears*]

QUEX [*in an altered tone*]. Chick — you see that hussy?

FRAYNE. Miss Fullgarney?

QUEX. I can't make her out. I believe she wants to play some trick on me.

FRAYNE. Trick?

QUEX. 'Pon my soul, I believe she's prying — spying on me.

FRAYNE. That nice gal!

QUEX. Oh, I daresay I'm wrong. But if I found it so, I — I'd wring her neck.

FRAYNE [*wistfully*]. It's an alluring neck.

QUEX. Possibly. But I'd wring it ——!

[*They go up the steps together*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT

ACT III

The scene represents two rooms — a bedroom and a boudoir — separated by an arched opening across which a portière is hung. The portière is, however, drawn aside, and the bedroom, in which is a bed with an elaborate canopy, is partly revealed. The boudoir is nearest to the spectator. Above the fireplace, with bare hearth, on the right, is a broad window running obliquely toward the centre, concealed by heavy curtains. On the left of the window, facing the audience, is a door admitting to a long, narrow passage in which a hanging lamp is burning; and on the left of this door is the arched opening dividing the bedroom from the boudoir. Another door opens into the boudoir on the opposite side from a corridor or landing. Beyond this door, against the wall, is a cabinet, on top of which is a clock. A chair stands at each end of this cabinet. On the left of the arched opening — placed obliquely, the mirror turned from the audience — is a cheval-glass; and on the right is a sculptured figure or ornamental pillar supporting a lighted lamp. Before the window stands a large dressing-table. On the table are a pair of candelabra with lighted candles, a looking-glass, toilet-bottles, and a hand-mirror. A chair faces the dressing-table. Nearer to the spectator are a writing-table, with a heap of French novels on it, and an arm-chair. Opposite stand a circular table, an arm-chair, and a settee. A silver box containing cigarettes, an ash-tray, a match-stand, and a lighted spirit-lamp are on this table.

The rooms are richly furnished and decorated, but in an old-fashioned and formal manner. Everything is subdued and faded in tone. There are no pillows upon the chairs, nor on the settee, nor any other signs of ease and comfort. Keys are in the locks of both the doors.

[*The* DUCHESS *and* MRS. EDEN *are seated — the* DUCHESS *in the arm-chair,* MRS. EDEN *upon the settee — smoking cigarettes.* MRS. EDEN *is wearing a smart dressing-jacket; the* DUCHESS *is still fully dressed.* SOPHY, *who has assumed an apron, is engaged in bringing hair-brushes and some toilet-bottles from the bedroom and in arranging them upon the dressing-table. Her eyes are constantly upon the* DUCHESS]

MRS. EDEN. These are awfully pleasant cigarettes. I didn't know you ——

DUCHESS [*plaintively*]. My doctor insists — for my nerves.

MRS. EDEN [*blowing rings*]. I love smoking. Such a bore, because women are rather dropping it. [*Examining her cigarette*] What *are* these?

DUCHESS. I forget.

MRS. EDEN. I see — Argyropulos.

[*There is a knock at the door.* SOPHY *goes to the door and opens it slightly; a note is handed to her*]

SOPHY [*looking at the note*]. Oh, thanks. [*Closing the door*] I beg your pardon, your Grace — it's for me.

[*She returns to the dressing-table, reading the note*]

MRS. EDEN [*jestingly*]. Ah, Sophy! you must encourage no more sweethearts now, remember.

SOPHY. This is from *him*, Mrs. Eden — from Mr. Valma, saying good-night. He's gone to bed.

MRS. EDEN. Good gracious! how do *you* know?

SOPHY. Mrs. Gregory, the housekeeper, has allowed him to sleep here to-night, so that we may go back together in the morning.

MRS. EDEN. Ah, yes.

DUCHESS [*taking off her bracelets*]. My jewel-case, Sophy.

[SOPHY *puts the note to her lips, slips it into the bodice of her dress, and re-enters the bedroom*]

MRS. EDEN. [*To the* DUCHESS] By-the-by, what *did* Valma see in your hand, Duchess, after dinner? Why wouldn't you tell us?

DUCHESS. I was too vexed at the moment. [*With downcast eyes*] He professed to discover that a number of men are in love with me.

MRS. EDEN. Yes, but what made you angry?

DUCHESS. Why, *that*.

MRS. EDEN. That!

DUCHESS. They were shocking words to listen to, even when spoken by a mere fortune-teller. And you — why did *you* not confide to us the result of Mr. Valma's reading of your palm?

[SOPHY *comes from the bedroom, carrying a jewel-case, which she deposits upon the dressing-table*]

MRS. EDEN. I was in a rage too. Ha! there's only *one* man in love with *me*, it appears.

DUCHESS [*with a shudder*]. One is sufficiently dreadful.

MRS. EDEN. Horrid! [*Making a moue*] It's Jack — my husband!

DUCHESS [*reprovingly*]. Hush, dear Mrs. Eden! Sophy —— [SOPHY *comes to the* DUCHESS. *Languidly*] I shall read for half an hour before attempting to sleep. Put me into something loose.

SOPHY. Yes, your Grace.

[SOPHY *again retires to the bedroom*]

MRS. EDEN [*rising*]. May I look at your literature?

[MRS. EDEN *goes to the writing-table and turns over the books she finds there. The* DUCHESS *glances at the clock, and eyes* MRS. EDEN *with impatience*]

MRS. EDEN. "*Le Calvaire d'une vierge.*" "*Lune de Miel.*" "*Les Aventures de Madame Plon.*" Oh, I've heard of this! this is a little — h'm! — isn't it?

DUCHESS. I read those things for the sake of their exquisitely polished style; the subjects escape me.

MRS. EDEN [*seating herself by the writing-table and dipping into "Madame Plon"*] Ah, yes, the style — the style. [*Absorbed*] We haven't much real literary style in England, have we?

[SOPHY *returns, carrying a pink tea-gown trimmed with green ribbons, and a richly embroidered Mandarin's robe*]

SOPHY. Will your Grace put on one of these? [*With a curl of the lip*] They're both very becoming, I should think.

DUCHESS [*smiling sadly*]. Becoming! as if that mattered, child!

SOPHY. Which will your Grace ——?

DUCHESS. [*To herself, closing her eyes*] *Couleur de rose* — [*To* SOPHY] er — that pink rag. Take off my collarette.

[SOPHY *lays the tea-gown and the robe over the back of the settee and proceeds to unfasten the* DUCHESS'S *pearl collarette*]

MRS. EDEN [*startled by some passage in the book she is reading*]. Oh, I *say!*

DUCHESS. What, dear Mrs. Eden?

MRS. EDEN [*bethinking herself — soberly*]. Ah, yes, the style is excellent, isn't it?

DUCHESS. [*To* SOPHY, *while the collarette is in process of removal*] Have you everything you require for the night, child?

SOPHY. Yes, thank you, your Grace. Miss Gilchrist, Mrs. Eden's maid, has lent me a night-gown and a pair of slippers.

DUCHESS [*handing her bracelets to* SOPHY]. Drop them into the case.

[SOPHY *puts the collarette and bracelets in the jewel-case. The* DUCHESS, *rising, again looks at the clock and at* MRS. EDEN. SOPHY *returns to the* DUCHESS, *who is now behind the settee*]

Duchess. [*To* Sophy] It is very good of you, Sophy, to attend upon me.

Sophy [*averting her head*]. Not at all, your Grace.

Duchess [*taking up the Mandarin's robe*]. Here is a pretty thing for you. [*Giving the robe to* Sophy] Wear it to dress your hair in, in the morning.

Sophy [*breathing shortly*]. Oh, no, your Grace — please ——!

Duchess. Nonsense, child; take it.

[Sophy, *somewhat out of countenance, lays the robe over the back of the chair*]

Mrs. Eden [*looking up*]. Well, you are a lucky girl, Sophy!

Sophy. Yes, I know it's very beautiful; [*returning to the* Duchess] but I — I think I'd rather not ——

Duchess. Tsch, tsch! help me. [*The* Duchess *is standing before the cheval-glass, which conceals her from the audience. With* Sophy's *aid, she slips out of her dress and puts herself into the tea-gown, while she talks to* Mrs. Eden] Miss Eden is not well to-night, I am afraid. She didn't come into the drawing-room.

[Mrs. Eden *rises and goes to the settee, upon which she partly kneels while she chatters to the* Duchess]

Mrs. Eden. She complained of headache and bolted upstairs. Muriel is such an odd girl at times.

Duchess. A sweet one.

Mrs. Eden. Perfectly adorable. Only I wish she wasn't so moody and uncertain.

Duchess. But a headache — [*sympathetically*] dear child!

Mrs. Eden. An engaged girl ought not to have a headache — no girl ought. It's just one of those things that make a man ponder.

Duchess. Ponder.

Mrs. Eden. Reflect. A man loves to think a girl is like an angel — beautiful pink and white right through, with no clock-work. The moment she complains of headache, or toothache, or a chilblain on the heel, the angel game is off, and she's got to try and hold her own as a simple mortal. And as a mortal she's not in it with a man. No, it's angel or nothing with us women. I remember my Mater saying to me when I was engaged to Jack, "Sybil, now mind! enjoy the very best of health till you have been married at least ten years; and then be sure you have an excellent motive for cracking-up." [*The clock tinkles out the half-hour. She glances at the clock*]. Half-past eleven! the dead of night for this house! [*Rising*] I'll be off to my cot.

[Sophy *carries the* Duchess's *dress into the bedroom*]

Duchess [*coming to* Mrs. Eden]. *Must* you? Good-night.

Mrs. Eden. So nice of you to allow me this gossip.

Duchess. Delighted.

[*They kiss affectionately*]

Mrs. Eden. We go shopping together to-morrow, do we not?

Duchess. Yes, yes.

Mrs. Eden [*with exaggerated regret*]. To-morrow! your last day here! misery! [*At the door, finding she still has "Madame Plon" in her hand*] Oh! do you happen to be on this one?

Duchess. Not that one.

Mrs. Eden. I wonder whether you'd lend it to me?

Duchess. Gladly.

Mrs. Eden. As you say, there is something about these French writers ——

Duchess. Style.

Mrs. Eden. That's it — style. [*Opening the door*] Ah! lights out.

Duchess. Can you see?

Mrs. Eden [*going out*]. There's just a glimmer —— [*She disappears*]

Duchess. I'll keep the door open till you have turned the corner.

[Sophy *comes back and stands watching the* Duchess. *The* Duchess *remains at the open door for a little while, then kisses her hand to* Mrs. Eden *and closes the door*]

Sophy. Shall I brush your Grace's hair now?

Duchess [*going to the writing-table and taking up a book*]. No. I will do it. The exertion of brushing my hair, I often find, encourages sleep. I'll put myself to bed. Run away. Don't let me see or hear anything of you till the morning. Eight o'clock. [*She reclines upon the settee and opens her book.* Sophy, *eying her keenly, is about to withdraw*] Oh — Sophy! [Sophy *returns*] Do you — believe in Mr. Valma?

Sophy. Believe in him, your Grace?

Duchess. Believe that when he reads a woman's hand he has really the power of divination — the power he professes?

SOPHY. Oh, yes.

DUCHESS [*looking away*]. Then if he tells a woman that a great many men are deeply in love with her, you — you ——?

SOPHY. I'm sure he knows what he's talking about.

DUCHESS [*with a little purr of contentment*]. Ah! [*Assuming indifference*] I heard recently of an instance of his having conjectured such a state of affairs from the lines of a woman's hand. [*Severely*] I could only hope that his surmise was an incorrect one.

SOPHY [*her eyes flashing scornfully*]. You see, your Grace, if a woman is pretty, and Valma finds Venus's girdle well marked in her palm; and if he concludes from other signs that she's vain and light and loose; it isn't much to suppose that there are a few horrid men licking their lips at the thought of her.

DUCHESS [*shocked*]. My good girl! what curious expressions you make use of! [*Resuming her reading*] That's all.

[SOPHY *goes to the door and opens it*]

SOPHY. I wish your Grace good-night.

DUCHESS [*raising her head for a moment*]. Good-night. You are not taking your robe.

[SOPHY *looks at the robe and hesitates; in the end she gathers it up uneasily*]

SOPHY. I — I am very much obliged to your Grace ——

DUCHESS. Yes, you have thanked me enough. Turn out the lamp in that passage.

SOPHY. Certainly, your Grace.

[SOPHY *disappears, shutting the door after her. The* DUCHESS *remains quite still for a moment, then rises promptly, replaces her book, and — seating herself at the dressing-table — puts her hair in order. This done, she takes up the hand-mirror and smiles, frowns, and looks caressingly at herself. Then she lays the hand-mirror aside, blows out the candles upon the dressing-table, and poses before the cheval-glass. Ultimately, completely assured as to her appearance, she cautiously opens the door at which Sophy has departed, and, going a few steps along the passage, listens with strained ears. The passage is now in darkness. Apparently satisfied, the* DUCHESS *returns, and, closing the door gently, turns the key in the lock. Her next proceeding is to attempt to tear one of the ribbons from her tea-gown. Failing in this, she detaches it with the aid of a pair of scissors, and, opening the door leading from the corridor, ties the ribbon to the outer door-handle. Whereupon she closes the door and walks about the room contentedly. Suddenly she pauses, and, going to the cabinet, produces a small tray on which are a bottle of champagne and a champagne glass. Placing the tray on the circular table, she regards the single glass thoughtfully. Then, as if struck by an idea, she disappears into the bedroom. After a brief interval, the door opens softly and* QUEX *enters, carrying a lighted wax match. Being in, he shuts the door silently and looks about the room. Hearing the* DUCHESS *in the adjoining apartment, he frowns and blows out the match. Coming to the circular table, he contemplates the preparation for his reception with distaste; then, flinging the match into the ash-tray, he sits, with a set, determined look upon his face. After another short pause, the* DUCHESS *returns, polishing a tumbler with a cambric handkerchief.* QUEX *rises*]

DUCHESS [*under her breath*]. Ah! [*He bows stiffly. She places the tumbler on the tray, tosses the handkerchief aside, and — first motioning him to stand away from the line of the door — opens the door, removes the ribbon from the handle, closes and locks it. Then she turns to him with a long-drawn sigh*] Ah—h—h!

QUEX [*coming down gloomily*]. Is it all right?

DUCHESS. Quite. [*Advancing to him with outstretched hands*] Welcome, Harry! oh, welcome!

QUEX [*retreating a few steps — firmly*]. One moment. I have something to ask of you, Sidonia. [*Looking round*] You are sure ——?

DUCHESS. Yes, yes. Only don't raise your voice; [*glancing towards the*

door] my maid sleeps in a room at the end of that passage. [*Gracefully seating herself upon the settee and motioning him to sit beside her*] Sit down. Oh, the woe of this final meeting! the pathos of it!

QUEX [*bitterly, withdrawing the chair a little further from the table*]. Yes, I agree with you — there *is* an element of wofulness in this meeting; it is not altogether without pathos.

DUCHESS. Not altogether!

QUEX [*sitting, facing her*]. But, for yourself, my dear Sidonia — well, I have the consolation of believing that directly you turn your back upon Fauncey Court much of the wofulness of your position will evaporate.

DUCHESS. Harry!

QUEX. Forgive me — you admit that you delight in colouring even the most ordinary events of life rather highly. If I may put it more roughly, you are disposed, my dear Sidonia — at times, perhaps, a little inopportunely — to burn a good deal of red fire. [*Leaning forward*] At any rate, I beg an especial favour of you to-night.

DUCHESS. What —?

QUEX [*distinctly*]. No red fire.

DUCHESS [*chilled*]. Is this the something you had to ask of me? [*He bows in assent*] I cannot remember ever having seen you in this mood.

QUEX. This is our first actual *tête-à-tête* since my engagement to Miss Eden.

DUCHESS. Oh, I understand.

QUEX. And now shall I tell you where the wofulness and the pathos most conspicuously display themselves on this occasion?

DUCHESS. If you wish to.

QUEX. In the confounded treachery of my being here at all.

DUCHESS. Treachery?

QUEX. You know I am under a bond of good behaviour to my old aunt and to the Edens.

DUCHESS [*with a slight shrug of the shoulders*]. Really?

QUEX. Yes. [*Clenching his teeth*] And this is how I observe it. After all my resolutions, this — this is how I observe it.

[*He rises and paces up and down the room*]

DUCHESS [*fretfully*]. I am bound to remark that your present behaviour appears quite unimpeachable.

QUEX. Unimpeachable! here — alone — in your company!

DUCHESS [*covering her eyes with her hand*]. Oh, cruel, cruel!

QUEX [*pausing*]. Cruel ——?

DUCHESS [*with heaving bosom*]. But there! if you deny me the possession of real feeling, why should you hesitate to rain blows on me?

QUEX [*softening, coming to her*]. My dear Sidonia, I don't — I don't mean to ——

DUCHESS [*rising, and grasping his hands*]. Oh, Harry!

QUEX. Tsch! please! [*He releases himself and she sinks back upon the settee, her eyes closed. He regards her uncomfortably for a moment; then, with some hesitation, he produces from his coat-tail pocket a small box covered with a pretty brocade, with which he toys uneasily*] You expressed a wish to leave here on Friday with a sensation of despair at your heart, Sidonia. If your feeling about our parting is really a deep one, heaven knows I have no desire to make it more acute ——

DUCHESS [*partly opening her eyes*]. What is in that box, Harry?

QUEX. That is just what I was about to — to — [*Lifting the lid and closing it*] These are the little souvenirs which have passed from you to me at odd times.

DUCHESS [*with reviving interest*]. Ah, yes.

QUEX. I have had no other opportunity — [*Looking about him awkwardly for a place to deposit the box*] Will you —? shall I —? what the devil's to become of 'em?

DUCHESS [*sitting upright and passing her hand over her back hair*]. Were there a fire, we could crouch over it and watch the flames consume them one by one.

QUEX. But there isn't a fire.

DUCHESS [*rising, and taking the box from him*]. Let us examine them.

QUEX. No, no, no.

DUCHESS. Yes, yes. [*Opening the box and gazing into it*] Ah, poor little objects! dead, yet animate; silent, yet, oh, how eloquent! Don't go away ——

[*She overturns the contents of the box on to the table. They stand opposite each other, looking down upon the litter*]

DUCHESS [*she picks up a ring*]. A ring — [*thoughtfully*] turquoise and pearl. [*Recollecting*] Stockholm! You remember — that night you and I sat watching the lights of the café on the Norrbro ——!

QUEX [*hastily*]. Yes, yes; you've recalled it already to-day.

DUCHESS [*picking up a scarf-pin*]. A scarf-pin. Copenhagen! Ah, that pretty state-room of mine on the *Irene!*

QUEX. Yes, yes, charming.

DUCHESS [*taking up a locket*]. A locket — my name in brilliants. Genoa! Look, it still contains my hair.

QUEX [*nodding*]. H'm, um.

DUCHESS [*taking up a white shoe*]. My shoe. Where ——?

QUEX [*shaking his head*]. I don't ——

DUCHESS. Mentone!

QUEX. Of course — Mentone.

DUCHESS [*discovering some object in the shoe*]. What is this? [*Producing a garter of pale-blue silk, with a diamond buckle*] A — a — where —? ah, yes. [*Replacing the things in the box*] Oh, the poor little objects! dead, yet animate; silent, yet, oh, how eloquent!

[*She passes him and slips the box into the drawer of the writing-table. The clock strikes a quarter to twelve*]

QUEX [*glancing at the clock*]. By Jove, it's late! I — I'll leave you now, Sidonia.

DUCHESS [*turning*]. No, no — not yet, Harry. [*Coming to the table and taking up the box of cigarettes*] Why, you forget — [*offering him the box*] Argyropulos!

QUEX [*accepting a cigarette reluctantly*]. Thanks. [*Again looking at the clock*] Well — three minutes.

DUCHESS [*taking a cigarette, replacing the box, and holding the spirit lamp while he lights his cigarette from it*] You were not always so impatient. [*In lighting his cigarette, the flame of the lamp is blown out*] Ah! [*After replacing the lamp, she lights her cigarette from his, gazing into his eyes*] Argyropulos. [*Dreamily*] Once more — Argyropulos.

QUEX. Yes, yes — capital tobacco.

[*He gets away from her*]

DUCHESS. And look! you see, Harry?

QUEX [*turning*]. Eh?

DUCHESS [*pointing to the bottle of champagne*]. "Félix Poubelle, Carte d'Or"! [*Taking up the scissors which she has left upon the table*] The wire is already severed.

[*She commences to cut the string. He comes to her*]

QUEX [*taking the scissors from her*]. Oh, permit me.

[*Always intent upon avoiding her, he moves away, the bottle in his hand, cutting the string*]

DUCHESS [*following him*]. Is it likely to make a loud report?

QUEX. Hardly.

DUCHESS [*frowning censoriously*]. One doesn't want a sound of that sort to ring through the corridors. [*Looking about her impatiently*] These formal, frigid rooms!

[*She runs lightly into the bedroom, snatches a pillow from the bed, and returns to him*]

QUEX [*his hand upon the cork*]. What is that for?

DUCHESS [*enveloping his hand and the bottle in the pillow — calmly*]. It is wiser to muffle it.

[*He pauses, looking at her fixedly*]

QUEX [*in a low, grave voice*]. Dolly ——

DUCHESS. Dolly! [*Closing her eyes*] You give me my pet name again!

QUEX. Ah, Dolly, if only there wasn't quite so much in one's life — to muffle! [*He pulls the cork. She tosses the pillow on to the settee, a little irritably*] May I ——?

[*She inclines her head. He pours wine into the glasses; she takes the champagne glass, he the tumbler*]

DUCHESS [*sentimentally*]. Félix Poubelle, Carte d'Or! [*Looking at him over the brim of her glass*] *Eh bien! au joyeux passé!*

QUEX. *Non, non — à un avenir meilleur!*

DUCHESS. *Que vous êtes prosaïque soit!* [*They drink*]

[*She sits with a sigh of dissatisfaction*] Ah!

QUEX [*leaning against the table, drinking his wine*]. Wonderful wine — really exceptional. [*Struck by a thought, turning to her*] Forgive me — you must have found some difficulty in introducing Monsieur Félix Poubelle into this hallowed apartment.

DUCHESS. No. [*Sipping her wine*] My maid thinks it is by my doctor's orders.

QUEX. Your maid, yes — [*sipping his wine; then sitting upon the settee glass in hand*] — but my poor aunt must be highly scandalized.

DUCHESS [*her glass at her lips*]. Dear Lady Owbridge will not know. I told the girl to coax it out of the butler, as if it were for herself. These women have a way of doing such things.

QUEX [*laughing rather sadly*]. Ha, ha, ha! who is beyond temptation? Not even old Bristow — sixty if he's a day.

DUCHESS [*shrugging her shoulders*]. Sixty or sixteen — when a girl is fascinating ——

QUEX. Fascinating! your woman, Watson!

DUCHESS. No, no — Watson has left me for a few hours. I am speaking of Sophy.

[*There is a brief silence.* QUEX, *surprised in the act of drinking, lowers his glass slowly*]

QUEX [*in a queer voice*]. Sophy?

DUCHESS. Miss Fullgarney, the manicurist. She was so good as to offer to take Watson's place for tonight.

QUEX [*looking steadily before him*]. Oh?

[*There is another pause. The* DUCHESS *puts down her glass and, with her foot, pushes the footstool toward* QUEX]

DUCHESS [*sliding from her chair on to the footstool*]. Oh, Harry, the bitterness of this final meeting! the dull agony of it!

[*He gets rid of his tumbler and touches her arm*]

QUEX [*quietly*]. Duchess ——

DUCHESS [*surprised*]. Eh?

QUEX. I am sorry to alarm you, but this girl — Miss Eden's foster-sister ——

DUCHESS. What about her?

QUEX. She's a cat.

DUCHESS. Cat!

QUEX [*gathering his ideas as he proceeds*]. A common hussy, not above playing tricks — spying ——

DUCHESS. Spying!

QUEX. I caught her behind the hedge this evening, in the Italian garden, after you and I had been talking together.

DUCHESS. Behind the hedge!

QUEX. She had previously done her best to make an ass of me, while you were dressing for dinner ——! [*Looking toward the passage-door*] Where do you say her room is?

DUCHESS. At the end of that passage. [*They rise together, with very little movement*] Oh, but she is in bed, and asleep!

QUEX. *Is* she?

DUCHESS. Harry!

QUEX. Wait ——! [*He goes to the door, and examines the key-hole. Then he turns to the* DUCHESS *and beckons to her. She joins him. He says, in a whisper, pointing to the key-hole*] Do you notice ——?

DUCHESS. What?

QUEX. The key is in the lock horizontally.

DUCHESS. She may have been peeping at us? [*He nods. She is sick at the thought*] How inexcusably careless of me!

QUEX [*at her elbow*]. Listen. I'll keep out of sight. Open the door boldly and walk along the passage. See if there is any sign of movement ——

DUCHESS. Yes, yes. [*Steadying herself*] Perhaps we are disturbing ourselves unnecessarily.

QUEX [*nodding reassuringly*]. Perhaps so.

[*He draws back into the bedroom, but so that he can put his head out at the opening, and watch the* DUCHESS'S *proceedings. She goes to the door and lays her hand upon the key*]

DUCHESS [*faltering*]. Oh! oh, great heavens!

QUEX [*encouragingly*]. It's all right — it's all right. Very likely I am mistaken. Now!

[*The* DUCHESS *opens the door suddenly, and* SOPHY, *who is kneeling at the key-hole, lurches forward*]

DUCHESS. Ah!

[SOPHY, *enveloped in the Mandarin's robe, gathers herself up and, without a word, flies away along the passage. The* DUCHESS *shuts the door and walks unsteadily to the settee.* QUEX *comes down, his mouth set hard*]

QUEX. I was sure of it.

DUCHESS [*aghast*]. What will she do? will she tell?

QUEX. Yes — she'll tell.

DUCHESS. Why do you speak so positively?

QUEX. She is in Miss Eden's confidence — the trull. And she has always shown her teeth at me, now I remember. [*Drawing a deep breath*] Oh, yes, I see — Miss Fullgarney has meant mischief throughout.

DUCHESS [*sinking upon the settee*]. Oh!

QUEX [*quietly*]. Well — *I'm done.*

DUCHESS. Oh, my reputation!

QUEX. I'm — done.

DUCHESS. My reputation! I have

never ceased to guard that, as you know.

QUEX. I've lost her.

DUCHESS. My reputation!

QUEX. Of course, I deserve it. But —— [*He sits, his head bowed*]

DUCHESS [*looking up*]. To think — to think that I allowed this plausible creature to thrust herself upon me! [*He raises his head, glaring fiercely. She beats the pillow*] Oh! oh! my reputation in the hands of this low creature!

QUEX. Ah ——! [*With a half-smothered cry he goes to the door and pulls it open. The* DUCHESS *runs after him and seizes his arm*] I said I'd wring her damned neck — I told Frayne so.

DUCHESS [*pushing him away from the door*]. Don't! don't! violence will not help us. [*She closes the door; he stands clutching the chair by the writing-table. The clock strikes twelve*] Midnight. [*Leaning upon a chair*] At any rate, you had better go now.

QUEX [*turning to her*]. I beg your pardon; I regret having lost control of myself.

DUCHESS [*miserably*]. It has been a wretchedly disappointing meeting.

QUEX [*heavily*]. Let us see each other in the morning. [*She nods*] Be walking in the grounds by nine.

DUCHESS. Yes. [*Rallying*] After all, Harry, there may be nothing behind this woman's behaviour. It may have been only the vulgarest curiosity on her part.

QUEX [*incredulously*]. Ha! However, in that case ——

DUCHESS. Money.

QUEX. Money.

DUCHESS. I ought to sound her directly she presents herself at my bedside, ought I not?

QUEX. Earlier — before she has had time to get about the house. Stand at nothing. If she's to be bought, she shall have whatever she demands — any sum!

DUCHESS. How liberal of you!

[QUEX *walks toward the door, then turns to her*]

QUEX. One thing I hope I need hardly say, Duchess?

DUCHESS. What ——?

QUEX [*with dignity*]. Worst come to the worst, I shall defend you by every means in my power. *I'm* done, I feel sure [*drawing himself up*]; but, of course, I shall lie for you like the devil.

DUCHESS [*plaintively*]. Thanks. And I have dragged you into it all.

QUEX. Tsch! [*Bowing stiffly*] Good-night.

DUCHESS. Good-night. [*She goes to the table and prepares to remove the tray. Having turned the key of the door,* QUEX *pauses. She says fretfully*] Oh, why don't you go, Harry?

QUEX [*facing her sharply, a new light in his eye*]. No! *you* go.

DUCHESS [*in astonishment*]. I!

QUEX [*returning to her excitedly*]. I tell you I can't wait through a night of suspense: Quick! [*Pacing the room*] Leave me to deal with her here, at once.

DUCHESS. You!

QUEX [*snapping his fingers*]. By Jove, yes!

DUCHESS. What are you going to do?

QUEX. Give her a fair chance, and then — spoil her tale against you, in any event.

DUCHESS. How?

QUEX. Trust to me. [*Impatiently*] Go, Duchess.

DUCHESS. But where? where can I ——?

QUEX. Run away to Mrs. Jack — ask her to let you share her room to-night. [*Pointing to the writing-table*] Ah —! scribble a message ——

[*The* DUCHESS *seats herself at the writing-table and writes agitatedly at his dictation*]

QUEX [*dictating*]. "The Duchess of Strood has been seized with a dreadful fit of nerves and has gone to Mrs. Eden's room. Come to her there at eight." Lay that upon the bed. [*Indicating the bedroom*] Is there a door in there?

DUCHESS [*rising breathlessly*]. Yes.

QUEX. Locked?

DUCHESS. Yes.

QUEX. The key. [*Imperatively*] Give me the key. [*She runs into the bedroom and, having laid the written message upon the bed, disappears for a moment. He refills his tumbler and drinks, chuckling sardonically as he does so*] Ha, ha, ha! [*She returns with the key, which he pockets*] The bell that rings in your maid's room ——? [*She points to the bell-rope hanging beside the passage-door*] Good. [*Motioning to her to go*] Now —— [*She is going toward the other door; he detains her*] Hist! [*Thoughtfully*] If anything unusual should occur, remember that we were simply discussing books and pictures in the Italian garden before dinner.

Duchess [*intently*]. Books and pictures — of course. [*In an outburst*] Oh, you are certain you can save my reputation?

Quex [*politely*]. *Yours* at least, my dear Duchess. Sleep well.

[*She is about to open the door when a thought strikes her and she again runs up to the bed*]

Duchess. Ah ——!

Quex. Hey?

[*She returns, carrying her night-dress case — a thing of white satin with a monogram and coronet embroidered upon it. She holds it up to him in explanation; he nods, and she lets herself out. He immediately locks the door at which she has departed and slips the key into his waistcoat pocket. This done, he pulls the bell-rope communicating with the maid's room and takes up a position against the wall so that the opening of the passage door conceals him from the view of the person entering. After a pause the door is opened and* Sophy *appears. The frills of her night-dress peep out from under the Mandarin's robe, and she is wearing a pair of scarlet cloth slippers; altogether she presents an odd, fantastic figure. She pauses in the doorway hesitatingly, then steadies herself and, with a defiant air, stalks into the bedroom. Directly she has moved away,* Quex *softly closes the door, locks it, and pockets the key. Meanwhile* Sophy, *looking about the bedroom for the* Duchess, *discovers the paper upon the bed. She picks it up, reads it, and replaces it, and, coming back into the boudoir, encounters* Quex]

Sophy. Oh!

Quex [*with a careless nod*]. Ah?

Sophy [*recovering herself, and speaking with a contemptuous smile*]. So her Grace has packed herself off to Mrs. Eden's room. [*Firmly*] Who rang for me, please?

Quex. *I* rang.

Sophy. You? what for?

Quex. Oh, you and I are going to have a cosey little chat together.

Sophy [*haughtily*]. I don't understand you.

Quex. We'll understand one another well enough, in a minute.

[*He lights another cigarette and seats himself upon the settee. She moves to the back of a chair, eying him distrustfully*]

Quex. Now then! You've been at the key-hole, have you?

Sophy [*slightly embarrassed*]. Y—yes.

Quex [*sharply*]. Eh?

Sophy [*defiantly*]. Yes; you know I have.

Quex. Ah. And I should like to know a little more, while we are upon the delicate subject of spying. When I found you behind the cypress-hedge this evening before dinner ——

Sophy. Well?

Quex. You had just at that moment returned to the Italian garden, you said.

Sophy. Yes, so I said.

Quex. As a matter of fact, you had been there some time, I presume?

Sophy. A minute or two.

Quex. Heard anything?

Sophy [*laughing maliciously*]. Ha, ha, ha! I heard her Grace say, "to-night" — [*faintly mimicking the* Duchess] "to-night!" [*With a curl of the lip*] That was enough for me.

Quex. Quite so. You told a deliberate lie, then, when I questioned you?

Sophy. Yes.

Quex. Earlier in the evening, that manicure game of yours — nothing but a damned cunning trick, eh?

Sophy. I beg you won't use such language.

Quex. A trick, eh?

Sophy. *Certainly.*

Quex. You wanted — what did you want?

Sophy [*disdainfully*]. A kiss, or a squeeze of the waist — anything of that sort would have done.

Quex. Oh, would it? You didn't get what you wanted, though.

Sophy. No; I suppose you were frightened.

Quex [*angrily*]. What!

Sophy. Too many people about for you.

Quex [*stifling his annoyance*]. Tsch! If I had — [*with a wave of the hand*] what course would you have taken, pray?

Sophy [*with an air of great propriety*]. Complained at once to Lady Owbridge.

Quex. As it is — what do you think of doing now?

SOPHY. About you and her Grace?
QUEX [*scowling*]. Yes.
SOPHY. Oh, tell the ladies in the morning, first thing.
QUEX [*again putting a check upon himself*]. Ha, ha! Why do you behave in this contemptible way?
SOPHY. It isn't contemptible.
QUEX. Isn't it?
SOPHY. Not under the circumstances.
QUEX. What circumstances?
SOPHY [*hotly*]. A wicked man like you engaged to a sweet girl like Miss Muriel!
QUEX. I see. [*Politely*] You don't approve of the engagement?
SOPHY. Should think not!
QUEX. Always done your best to poison Miss Eden's mind against me, I expect?
SOPHY. Always let her know my opinion of you. And I was right!
QUEX. Right?
SOPHY. This very day, poor thing, she was saying how proud she is of you because you've turned over a new leaf for her sake; and I told what *your* promises are worth. Yes, I was right! And now I can prove it!

[*He rises; she hastily places herself on the other side of the chair*]

QUEX. Look here! [*Leaning against the table, the chair being between him and* SOPHY] What will you take to hold your tongue?
SOPHY. Nothing.
QUEX. Oh, but wait. This isn't a matter of a handful of sovereigns. I'll give you a couple of thousand pounds to keep quiet about this.
SOPHY. No, thank you, my lord.
QUEX. Four thousand.
SOPHY [*shaking her head*]. No.
QUEX. Five.
SOPHY. No.
QUEX. How much?
SOPHY. Not twenty thousand. I'm extremely comfortably off, my lord, but if I wasn't I wouldn't accept a penny of your money. All I wish is to save Miss Muriel from marrying a — a gentleman who isn't fit for her. And that's what I intend doing.

[*They stand looking at each other for a moment, silently; then he walks away, thoughtfully*]

QUEX [*in an altered tone*]. Come here.
SOPHY [*with an eye on the door*]. Certainly not.
QUEX. As you please. Miss Fullgarney ——
SOPHY. I hear you.
QUEX. I should like to settle this business with you pleasantly — if possible. Allow me to say this. I don't think I am quite such an atrocious person as you appear to believe; in fact I can assure you I am not.
SOPHY [*gathering her robe about her and advancing a few steps*]. You must excuse me, my lord, but — [*glancing round the room*] you evidently forget where you are.
QUEX. No, I don't; but I tell you — I tell you sincerely — that my visit to her Grace to-night was an innocent one.
SOPHY [*turning her head away, in great disdain*]. Really!
QUEX. Really. You won't accept money?
SOPHY. No, indeed, I will not.
QUEX. Very well. Ha! it's an odd attitude for a man like myself to adopt toward — [*indicating* SOPHY *by a motion of the hand*] But I make an appeal to you.
SOPHY [*elevating her eyebrows*]. Appeal?
QUEX [*with simple feeling and dignity*]. I love Miss Eden. I would be a good husband to that young lady. Let me off.
SOPHY. Let you off?
QUEX. Don't tell on me. Don't try to rob me of Miss Eden. Let me off.
SOPHY. I'm sorry to say I can't, my lord.
QUEX. You won't?
SOPHY. I won't. [*With a slight inclination of the head* QUEX *turns away and stands leaning against the settee with his back toward* SOPHY. *The clock strikes the quarter-of-an-hour. There is a short silence*] If your lordship has quite done with me ——? [*He makes no response. She tosses her head*] I wish you good-night, my lord. [*She goes to the passage-door and turns the handle*] It's locked. This door's locked. [*Looking at him*] The door's locked. [*Rattling at the door-handle*] Where's the key? [*Searching about on the floor near the door*] Where's the ——? [*Coming forward a step or two*] Has your lordship got the key of this door? [*Still obtaining no answer, she stands staring at him for a moment; then she goes quickly to the other door and tries the handle. As she does so,* QUEX *turns sharply and, leaning upon the back of the settee, watches her.*

After shaking the door-handle vigorously, she wheels round and faces him, indignantly] What's the meaning of this?

QUEX [*grimly*]. Ah!

SOPHY. Oh ——! [*She sweeps round to avoid him, and then runs into the bedroom. When she has gone he seats himself in the chair by the writing-table in a lazy attitude, his legs stretched out, his hands in his pockets. After a moment or two she returns breathlessly*] I'm locked in!

QUEX. Yes.

SOPHY. You have locked me in!

QUEX. Yes.

SOPHY. How dare you!

QUEX. Why, you didn't think you were going to have it *all* your own way, did you, Sophy?

SOPHY. I'll thank you to be less familiar. Let me out.

QUEX. Not I.

SOPHY. You let me out directly.

QUEX [*pointing a finger at her*]. You'll gain nothing by raging, my good girl. Ha! now you appreciate the curiously awkward position in which you have placed yourself.

SOPHY. I've placed myself in no ——

QUEX. Oh, come, come! Taking me at my blackest, I'm not quite the kind of man that a young woman who prides herself upon her respectability desires to be mixed up with in this fashion.

SOPHY. Mixed up with!

QUEX. Well — [*stretching out his arms*] here we are, you know.

SOPHY. Here we are!

QUEX. You and I, dear Sophy. [*Putting his leg over the arm of his chair*] Now just sit down ——

SOPHY. I sha'n't.

QUEX. While I picture to you what will happen in the morning.

SOPHY. In the morning?

QUEX. In a few hours' time. In the first place, you will be called in your room. You won't be there.

SOPHY. Won't I!

QUEX. No. You won't be there. A little later my man will come to *my* room. I sha'n't be there. At about the same hour, her Grace will require your attendance. Where will *you* be? She will then, naturally, desire to return to her own apartments. You are intelligent enough, I fancy, to imagine the rest. [*After a brief pause, she breaks into a peal of soft, derisive laughter*] I am deeply flattered by your enjoyment of the prospect.

SOPHY. Ha, ha, ha! why, you must take me for a fool!

QUEX. Why?

SOPHY. Why, can't you see that our being found together like this, here or anywhere, would do for *you* as well as for me?

QUEX [*rising*]. Of course I see it. [*Advancing to her*] But, my dear Sophy, *I* am already done for. *You* provide for that. And so, if I have to part with my last shred of character, I will lose it in association with a woman of your class rather than with a lady whom I, with the rest of the world, hold in the highest esteem.

SOPHY [*after a pause*]. Ho! oh, indeed?

QUEX. Yes. Yes, indeed.

SOPHY [*with a shade less confidence*]. Ha, ha! if your lordship thinks to frighten me, you've got hold of the wrong customer. Ha, ha, ha! two or three things you haven't reckoned for, I can assure you. Here's one — I told Miss Muriel exactly what I heard, between you and your Duchess, in the garden this evening.

QUEX [*grinding his teeth*]. You did! [*Involuntarily making a threatening movement toward her*] You did, you ——!

SOPHY [*cowering over the settee*]. Oh!

QUEX [*recovering himself*]. Oh, you did, did you?

SOPHY [*facing him defiantly*]. Yes, I did.

QUEX [*coolly*]. Well? and what then? You listen to a conversation carried on in an open spot, from which your mischievous ears manage to detach the phrase "to-night." My explanation, if I am called upon to make one, will be absurdly simple.

SOPHY [*derisively*]. Ha, ha! will it! ha, ha, ha! I daresay!

QUEX. Yes. You see, I promised her Grace that I would send a book to her room to-night — *to-night.* My man had gone to bed; I brought it myself, intending to hand it to Mrs. Watson, her maid. In the meantime, the Duchess had joined Mrs. Eden and I found *you* here.

SOPHY. You couldn't tell such an abominable lie!

QUEX [*imperturbably*]. I found *you* here. And then — what is the obvious sequel to the story? [*Shrugging his shoulders*] I'm a wicked man, Sophy,

and you're an undeniably pretty girl — and the devil dared me.

SOPHY. Oh ——!

QUEX [*taking up the bottle of champagne*]. And an excellent banquet you had chanced to provide for the occasion. [*Reading the label*] "Félix Poubelle, Carte d'Or." It will appear, I am afraid, that you had been preparing for the entertainment of some amorous footman.

SOPHY [*snapping her fingers at him*]. Puh! bah! Oh, the whole house shall know that that is your Duchess's champagne.

QUEX. Excuse me — Mr. Brewster, the butler, will disprove that tale. You wheedled this out of him on your own account, remember.

SOPHY [*disconcerted*]. Oh — ah, yes — but ——

QUEX. For yourself, my dear Sophy.

SOPHY [*falteringly*]. Yes, but — but she made me do it.

QUEX. She made you do it! [*Replacing the bottle, sternly*] And who, pray, will accept your word, upon this or any other point, against that of a lady of the position of the Duchess of Strood?

[*He walks away from her and examines the books upon the writing-table. She sits on the settee, a blank expression upon her face*]

SOPHY [*after a little consideration, wiping her brow with the back of her hand*]. At any rate, my darling — Miss Muriel — would quickly see through a horrid trick of this sort.

QUEX. I bet you a dozen boxes of gloves to a case of your manicure instruments that she doesn't.

SOPHY. I said to her to-day, at my place, that I was certain, if I could meet you alone in some quiet spot I could get a kiss out of you.

QUEX [*under his breath, glaring at her*]. You ——! [*Coolly*] Oh, now I understand. Yes, my dear, but Miss Eden is scarcely likely to believe that a modest girl would carry her devotion to this extent. Good heavens! why, your attire ——! [*She pulls her robe about her sharply*] And a woman who compromises herself, recollect, is never measured by her own character, always by her companion's.

[*She starts to her feet and paces the room, uttering cries of anger and indignation. He continues to interest himself in the books*]

SOPHY. Oh! no, no! my darling wouldn't think it of me! when I've abused you so continually! she surely couldn't! oh! oh! [*With flashing eyes*] Now, look here, my lord! you don't really imagine that I'm going to stick in this room with you patiently all through the night, do you?

QUEX. How do you propose to avoid it?

SOPHY [*pointing to the passage-door*]. As true as I'm alive, if you don't unlock that door, I — I — I'll scream the place down!

QUEX. Why scream? [*Pointing to the bell-rope which hangs beside the door*] There's the bell. I daresay a servant or two are still up and about. You'd rouse the house quicker in that way.

SOPHY. Much obliged to you for the hint. I will — I will —— [*She goes to the bell-rope and grasps it; then she looks round and sees him calmly turning the leaves of a book he has selected. She stares at him, with sudden misgiving*] Ha, now we shall see how much your grand scheme amounts to!

QUEX. We shall. Ring the bell.

SOPHY [*blankly*]. What do you mean?

QUEX. Pooh, my dear! ring, ring, ring! or yell! You won't be the first semi-circumspect young person who has got herself into a scrape and then endeavoured to save herself by raising a hullabaloo.

[*She slowly takes her hand from the bell-rope and moves a step or two toward him*]

SOPHY. Oh, that's what you'd try to make out, is it? [*He raises his eyes from his book and gives her a significant look. Leaning upon the arm of the settee, she says faintly*] You — you——!

QUEX. Yes, I tell you again, my dear, you have got yourself into a shocking mess. You've got *me* into a mess, and you've got yourself in a mess.

SOPHY [*pulling herself up and advancing to him till she faces him*]. You — you are an awful blackguard, my lord.

QUEX. Thank you, my dear. But you're not far wrong — I was a blackguard till I met Miss Eden; and now, losing Miss Eden, perhaps I'm going to be a bigger blackguard than before. At the same time, you know, there's not much to choose between us; for you're a low spy, an impudent, bare-faced liar, a common kitchen-cat who wriggles into the best rooms, gets herself fondled, and then spits. [*Passing her and throw-

ing himself, full-length, upon the settee and settling himself to read] Therefore I've no compunction in making you pay your share of this score, my dear Sophy — none whatever.

[*She walks feebly to the passage-door and stands rattling the handle in an uncertain way. At last she breaks down and cries a little*]

SOPHY. Oh! oh! oh! let me go, my lord. [*He makes no response*] Do let me go — please! will you? [*Approaching him and wiping her eyes upon the sleeve of her nightdress*] I hope your lordship will kindly let me go.

QUEX [*shortly*]. No.

SOPHY [*steadying herself*]. I don't want to rouse the house at this time o' night if I can help it ——

QUEX. Don't you?

SOPHY. Though I am certain I can make my story good anyway. But I'd rather your lordship let me out without the bother — [*Piteously*] Do! [*He turns a leaf of his book. She speaks defiantly*] Very well! very well! here I sit then! [*Seating herself*] We'll see who tires first, you or I! you or I! [*Again snapping her fingers at him*] Bah! you horror! you — horror!

QUEX [*raising himself on his elbow*]. Will you have this sofa? [*She gives him a fierce look*] A glass of your wine?

[*She rises, with a stamp of the foot, and once more paces the room. He sips his wine and resettles himself. She goes distractedly from one object to another, now leaning upon a chair, then against the pillar of the cheval-glass. Ultimately she comes to the bell-rope and fingers it again irresolutely*]

SOPHY [*faintly*]. My lord ——! [*He remains silent. She releases the bell-rope*] Oh—h—h! [*She pauses by the settee, looking down upon him as though she would strike him; then she walks away, and, seating herself in the chair by the bedside, drops her head upon the bed. The clock tinkles the half-hour. There is a short silence. Suddenly she rises, uttering a sharp cry, with her hand to her heart*] Oh! [*panting*] oh! oh!

QUEX [*looking at her*]. What now?

SOPHY. Valma!

QUEX. Valma?

SOPHY. Mr. Valma! oh, you know he is in the house!

QUEX. He! what's he doing here?

SOPHY. The housekeeper gave him permission to sleep here. You know! [*Stamping her foot*] Don't you know?

QUEX [*sitting up, alertly*]. Ho! my jealous friend, the palmist. *He* is on the premises, hey?

SOPHY [*distractedly*]. Let me out! oh, yes, he *is* jealous of me; he *is* jealous of me, and we've had a few words about you as it is ——

QUEX. Ah!

SOPHY. Oh, this would ruin me with Valma! oh, if your lordship hasn't any feeling for me, don't let Valma think that I'm a — that I'm ——! [*Going down on her knees before him*] Oh, I won't tell on you! I promise I won't, if you'll only let me go! I will hold my tongue about you and the Duchess! I take my solemn oath I'll hold my tongue!

QUEX [*rising*]. Ha! [*Calmly*] No, my dear Sophy, I wasn't aware that your *fiancé* is in the house. So the situation comes home to you a little more poignantly now, does it?

SOPHY [*rising and going to the passage-door*]. Unlock the door! where's the key?

QUEX. Wait, wait, wait! And you're going to keep your mouth shut after all, are you?

SOPHY [*rattling the door-handle*]. Yes, yes. Unlock it!

QUEX. Don't be in such a hurry.

SOPHY. I give you my sacred word ——

QUEX [*thoughtfully*]. Tsch, tsch, tsch! [*Sharply, with a snap of the fingers*] Yes — by Jove —! [*Pointing to the chair by the writing-table*] Sit down. [*Imperatively*] Sit down. [*She sits, wonderingly. He goes to the table, selects a plain sheet of paper and lays it before her. Then he hands her a pen*] Write as I tell you.

SOPHY [*tremblingly*]. What?

QUEX [*pointing to the ink*]. Ink. [*Dictating*] "My lord." [*She writes; he walks about as he dictates*] "My lord. I am truly obliged to you ——"

SOPHY. Yes.

QUEX. "For your great liberality ——"

SOPHY [*turning*]. Eh?

QUEX [*sternly*]. Go on. [*She writes*] "For your great liberality, and in once more availing myself of it I quite understand ——"

SOPHY [*weakly*]. Oh! [*After writing*] Yes.

QUEX. "I quite understand that our friendship comes to an end." [*She rises and faces him*] Go on.

SOPHY. Our friendship!

QUEX. Yes.

SOPHY. Our — *friendship!*

QUEX. Yes.

SOPHY. I won't.

QUEX. Very well.

SOPHY. How dare you try to make me write such a thing! [*He turns from her and, book in hand, resumes his recumbent position on the sofa. She approaches him, falteringly*] What would you do with that, if I did write it?

QUEX. Simply hold it in my possession, as security for your silence, until after my marriage with Miss Eden; then return it to you.

SOPHY. Oh, won't your lordship trust me?

QUEX [*contemptuously*]. Trust you! [*After a pause, she returns to the writing-table and takes up her pen again*] Where were we?

SOPHY [*feebly*]. "I quite understand ——"

QUEX. "That our friendship comes to an end." [*She writes. He rises and looks over her shoulder*] "While thanking you again for past and present favours ——"

SOPHY [*groaning as she writes*]. Oh! oh!

QUEX. "I undertake not to approach or annoy you in the future ——"

SOPHY. Oh!

QUEX. "Upon any pretext whatsoever. Yours respectfully ——" [*After watching the completion of the letter*] Date it vaguely — [*with a wave of the hand*] "Monday afternoon." Blot it. [*Moving away*] That's right. [*She rises, reading the letter with staring eyes. Then she comes to him and yields the letter, and he folds it neatly and puts it into his breast-pocket*] Thank you. I think I need detain you no longer.

SOPHY [*with a gasp*]. Ah! stop a bit! no, I won't!

QUEX. What's the matter with you?

SOPHY [*wildly*]. Why, it's like selling Muriel! Just to get myself out of this, I'm simply handing her over to you! I won't do it! I won't! [*She rushes to the bell-rope and tugs at it again and again*] She sha'n't marry you! she sha'n't! I've said she sha'n't, and she sha'n't! [*Leaving the bell-rope and facing him fiercely*] Oh, let your precious Duchess go scot free! After all, what does it matter who the woman is you've been sporting with, so that Miss Muriel is kept from falling into your clutches! Yes, I'll make short work of *you*, my lord. The ladies shall hear from *my* mouth of the lively half-hour I've spent with you, and how I've suddenly funked the consequences and *raised a hullabaloo!* Now, my lord! now then! now then!

[*His astonishment has given way to admiration; he gazes at her as if spell-bound*]

QUEX [*after a pause, during which she stands before him panting*]. By God, you're a fine plucked 'un! I've never known a better. [*Resolutely*] No, my girl, I'm damned if you shall suffer! Quick! listen! pull yourself together!

SOPHY [*hysterically*]. Eh? eh?

QUEX [*taking her letter from his pocket and thrusting it into her hand*]. Here's your letter! take it — I won't have it. [*Going quickly to the passage-door, unlocking it, and throwing the door open*] There you are!

SOPHY [*sobbing*]. Oh! oh!

[*There is a hurried, irregular knocking at the door*]

QUEX [*gripping her arm*]. Hush! [*In a whisper*] Call out — wait!

SOPHY [*raising her voice — unsteadily*]. Wait — one moment!

QUEX [*in her ear, as he gives her the key of the door*]. Say the Duchess is with Mrs. Jack; say she wants her letters brought to her in the morning! say anything ——

SOPHY. Yes, yes. [*Weeping and shaking and gasping, she goes to the door and unlocks it. He tip-toes into the bedroom and turns out the light there. She opens the door an inch or two*] Yes?

TWO VOICES [*a man's and a woman's*]. What is it? what's the matter?

SOPHY [*steadying herself with an effort*] Nothing. Only her Grace has gone to Mrs. Eden's room and wishes her letters taken there in the morning most particularly — see?

THE VOICES. What did you ring like that for? Thought the place was afire!

SOPHY. Oh, don't make a fuss about nothing. You servants *are* an old-fashioned lot. Bong swor!

THE VOICES [*angrily*]. Oh, good-night.

SOPHY. Ha, ha, ha!

[*She closes the door and totters away from it, sobbing hysterically, as* QUEX *comes to her*]

QUEX [*kindly*]. Be off. Go to bed. Serve me how you please. Miss Fullgarney, upon my soul, I — I humbly beg your pardon.

SOPHY [*passing him*]. Oh! oh! oh! [*Turning to him*] Oh, God bless you! You — you — you're a gentleman! I'll do what I can for you!

[*She staggers to the passage-door and disappears, closing the door behind her. Then he extinguishes the remaining light, and cautiously lets himself out at the other door*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT

ACT IV

The scene is the same, in every respect, as that of the First Act.

[*On the right* MISS CLARIDGE *is manicuring a young gentleman. On the left* MISS MOON *is putting her manicure-table in order, as if she has recently disposed of a customer.* MISS LIMBIRD *is again at her desk, busy over accounts. The door-gong sounds and, after a short interval,* QUEX *and* FRAYNE *enter, preceded by* MISS HUDDLE. FRAYNE *appears particularly depressed and unwell*]

QUEX [*nodding to* MISS LIMBIRD]. Good-morning.

MISS LIMBIRD. Morning.

QUEX. [*To* MISS HUDDLE] Miss Fullgarney has not yet arrived, you say?

MISS HUDDLE. Not yet.

QUEX [*looking at his watch*]. Twenty minutes to twelve.

MISS MOON. Yes, we've never known Miss Fullgarney to be so late at her business. I do hope she hasn't been run over and injured.

MISS HUDDLE. Or murdered by tramps.

QUEX. My dear young lady!

MISS MOON. Well, one does read *such* things in the ha'penny papers.

MISS HUDDLE. And she went down to Richmond yesterday afternoon, you know — to Fauncey Court.

QUEX. Of course I know — and slept there.

MISS MOON. Oh, did she?

QUEX. And has come up to town this morning.

MISS HUDDLE. Then she'll have gone home, I expect, to change.

MISS MOON. That's what she's done. [*Slightly disappointed*] Well, I *should* have been sorry if anything had happened to her.

QUEX. Naturally.

MISS HUDDLE. So should I, though I'm quite new here.

MISS MOON. It never gives *me* any pleasure to hear of people having their limbs crushed.

MISS HUDDLE. Or being murdered by tramps.

MISS MOON. Won't your lordship take a chair? [*To* FRAYNE, *who has wandered down to the window*] And you, sir?

[*The young gentleman, his manicuring being finished, has risen, paid* MISS LIMBIRD *and departed, followed by* MISS CLARIDGE *carrying her bowl and towel. The door-gong sounds*]

QUEX. Is that she?

MISS MOON. No; that young gentleman leaving.

[MISS MOON, *carrying her bowl and towel, and* MISS HUDDLE, *after exchanging a few words with* MISS LIMBIRD, *withdraw*]

FRAYNE. [*To* QUEX, *biliously*] How revoltingly hideous these gals look this morning!

QUEX. Same as yesterday. You're seedy.

FRAYNE [*closing his eyes*]. Oh, shockingly seedy. [*Sitting*] I'm in for a go of malaria, I fear.

QUEX. Shame of me to have routed you out of bed and bothered you with my affairs. [*Sitting*] But you can quite understand, Chick, how confoundedly anxious I am as to the attitude Miss Fullgarney will adopt toward me to-day.

FRAYNE. Quite, quite. Harry ——

QUEX. Yes?

FRAYNE. *What* champagne was it we drank last night at Richmond?

QUEX [*with some bitterness*]. Ha! "Félix Poubelle, Carte d'Or."

FRAYNE [*shaking his head*]. *I* can't take champagne.

QUEX. *Can't* you?

FRAYNE. I mean I oughtn't to.

QUEX. Oh. [*Referring to his watch again*] I've given you a pretty minute account of last night's tragedy, Chick.

"I'll do what I can for you" — those were the Fullgarney's words. Good lord, they came at me like a bolt from the blue! Does she intend to act up to them, eh? — that's the question. Surely she'll act up to them, Chick?

FRAYNE. Have you met the ladies this morning?

QUEX. Yes — except Muriel, who didn't show at breakfast.

FRAYNE. How did you find 'em?

QUEX. Amiability itself; *they* know nothing. [*Rising and looking down upon* FRAYNE] You see, Chick, all that Miss Fullgarney has to do — if she hasn't already done it — is to tell a trifling taradiddle to Muriel concerning the events of last night. Well, in effect, she has promised to do that, hasn't she? [*Impatiently*] Eh?

FRAYNE [*gloomily*]. Frankly, Harry, I shouldn't be in the least surprised if the jade sold you.

QUEX [*his jaw falling*]. You wouldn't?

FRAYNE. No.

QUEX. Phew! *I* should. [*Warmly*] By Jove, I should!

FRAYNE. I have conceived a great aversion to her — a long, scraggy gal.

QUEX [*with enthusiasm*]. As full of courage as a thoroughbred!

FRAYNE [*closing his eyes*]. I can picture her elbows; sharp, pointed elbows — the barbed fence of the spiteful woman.

QUEX. Pooh! yesterday she was alluring.

FRAYNE [*rising painfully*]. Yesterday ——! [*Gravely*] Harry, do you know there are moments when I feel that I am changing toward the sex; when I fancy I can discern the skeleton, as it were, through the rounded cheek?

QUEX. You!

FRAYNE. Yes, this novel sentiment is undoubtedly gaining possession of your old friend — gradually, perhaps, but surely.

QUEX [*regarding him searchingly*]. Excuse me, Chick — did you turn into the Beefsteak when you got back from Richmond last night?

FRAYNE. For an hour. Oh, a great mistake.

QUEX. What, a little whiskey on the top of champagne?

FRAYNE [*gazing pathetically at* QUEX *with watery eyes*]. A good deal of champagne underneath a lot of whiskey.

[*The door-gong sounds*]

QUEX. Who's this? [*He walks to the entrance, and looks into the further room*] The Fullgarney.

[*He returns to his former position, as* SOPHY *enters quickly, followed by* MISS CLARIDGE, MISS MOON, *and* MISS HUDDLE. SOPHY — *dressed as at the end of the First Act — is pale, red-eyed, and generally unstrung. She comes to* QUEX, *disconcerted by his presence*]

SOPHY [*confronting him*]. Oh, good-morning.

QUEX. May I beg a few moments ——?

SOPHY. Er — certainly. I'll just take off my things ——

[*He joins* FRAYNE. *She goes across the room where she is surrounded by her girls*]

MISS CLARIDGE. Oh, Miss Fullgarney, how ill you look!

MISS MOON. You do seem queer!

MISS HUDDLE. Just as if you were sickening for something.

MISS LIMBIRD [*coming between* MISS CLARIDGE *and* SOPHY]. Quite ghostly!

SOPHY. I'm all right, girls; I've had a bad night, that's all. [*Giving her umbrella to* MISS CLARIDGE *and her bag to* MISS MOON, *who passes it to* MISS HUDDLE] Here! hi! take that beastly bag. [*To* MISS LIMBIRD, *who is removing her hat*] Oh, don't waggle my head, whatever you do! [*To* MISS MOON, *who is pulling at her jacket*] Tear the thing off. [*Stripping off her gloves, and speaking in a whisper*] Girls, I don't want to be disturbed for five minutes.

MISS LIMBIRD. Very well, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY [*glancing at* QUEX *and* FRAYNE, *who are now looking out of the window, with their backs toward her*]. If Miss Eden should happen to turn up before I'm free, just mention who I'm engaged with, will you?

MISS MOON. Yes, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY. That'll do. [*With sudden fierceness*] What are you all staring at? Haven't any of *you* ever slept in a strange bed?

[*The girls retreat hastily, each carrying an article belonging to* SOPHY]

QUEX [*advancing a step or two*]. I am exceedingly sorry to see you looking so fatigued.

SOPHY [*faintly*]. Didn't close my eyes the whole night. [*She drops the*

portière over the entrance, and approaches QUEX] Well, my lord?

QUEX. I have ventured to call upon you, Miss Fullgarney, in the hope of ratifying the excellent understanding with which we parted last night.

SOPHY [*pointing to* FRAYNE]. Well, but — er ——

QUEX. Oh — oh, yes —— [*To* FRAYNE, *who has turned away*] Frayne —— [*To* SOPHY] I have taken my old and trusted friend, Sir Chichester Frayne, into my confidence in this regrettable business.

SOPHY [*dubiously*]. Indeed?

QUEX. I thought it desirable there should be a third party ——

SOPHY. P'r'aps you're right. [*Cuttingly*] One needs a third party when one has the honour of meeting your lordship — [*checking herself*]. Excuse me.

QUEX [*pleasantly, with a slight bow of acknowledgment*]. Before we go further, I may tell you that her Grace has informed me of what passed between you this morning.

SOPHY. Nothing passed.

QUEX. Precisely.

SOPHY. The lady beamed upon me, for all the world as if she was an angel spending a Saturday-to-Monday here below; and I dressed her hair for her just as if I didn't want to tear it out by the roots. And then she turned up her eyes and said she hoped every happiness would attend me, and went downstairs to prayers.

QUEX. Will you allow me to — to thank you?

SOPHY [*frigidly*]. You needn't. [*Abruptly*] Oh, by-the-by, the lady gave me a — a keepsake, she called it. [*Endeavouring to extract some bulky object from her pocket*] I mean to burn the thing, once I've found out what's inside it. But I can't get it open. Here it is.

[*She exhibits the little box, covered with brocade, which* QUEX *has returned to the* DUCHESS *in the previous Act*]

QUEX [*surprised*]. By Jove!

SOPHY [*simply*]. Eh?

QUEX. Er — I was wondering what she can have put in that little box.

SOPHY. Yes, *I* wonder. [*Pulling at the lid*] It's locked.

QUEX. I fancy it has one of those Bramah locks which snap. I may have a key —— [*He produces his key-ring and, promptly selecting a key, unlocks the box*] Fortunate coincidence.

[*She opens the box and takes out the first thing that presents itself — the blue silk garter with the diamond buckle*]

SOPHY [*scandalized*]. Oh, my gracious! I *beg* your pardon.

[*She leaves him hurriedly and hides the box in the cabinet*]

QUEX [*quietly to* FRAYNE]. Chick, she has passed the souvenirs on to Miss Fullgarney!

FRAYNE [*bitterly*]. How like a woman!

QUEX. Some women.

FRAYNE [*in disgust*]. Pah!

QUEX. Yesterday she was alluring.

FRAYNE [*waving the past from him*]. Yesterday — [*with a slight hiccup*] hic! [*Turning away apologetically*] The heat in this room ——

[*He walks away, as* SOPHY *returns to* QUEX]

QUEX. [*To* SOPHY] Well, I must not detain you longer, Miss Fullgarney. But there is, of course, one point upon which I should like to feel completely assured. You have seen Miss Eden ——?

SOPHY. No; not since last evening.

QUEX [*anxiously*]. When do you ——?

SOPHY [*looking away*]. I'm rather expecting her to pop in here during the day.

QUEX. Quite so. And — and then ——?

SOPHY [*facing him candidly*]. Your lordship told me last night that your little visit to the Duchess was a perfectly innocent one?

QUEX. Absolutely innocent. [*Hesitatingly*] I fear I cannot go further than that.

FRAYNE [*fanning himself with his handkerchief*]. By gad, why not, Harry? We are in Miss Fullgarney's hands. [*To* SOPHY] His lordship went to her Grace's apartment solely to return some gifts which he had accepted from her in the — ah — dim, distant past, and to say adieu.

SOPHY [*witheringly*]. Ah, I knew *she* was a double-faced thing [*looking at* QUEX *relentingly*]; but p'r'aps one *has* been a little down on *you*.

QUEX [*meekly*]. You have it in your power to atone for that amply.

SOPHY [*half feelingly, half sullenly*]. At any rate, you behaved, in the end, like a gentleman to me last night. And so — when I see Miss Muriel ——

QUEX. Yes?

SOPHY [*deliberately*]. I am going to tell her a lie.

QUEX [*with some emotion*]. Miss Fullgarney, I — I ——

SOPHY. Oh, I said I'd do what I can for you. [*Uncomfortably*] And this is all I *can* do.

QUEX [*light-heartedly*]. All!

SOPHY. Just to give you a chance.

QUEX. Chance! [*Drawing a deep breath*] You place my happiness beyond danger.

SOPHY [*impulsively, offering him her hand*]. I wish you luck, my lord.

[*He takes her hand and wrings it*]

FRAYNE [*who has opened the window for air*]. Hallo!

SOPHY [*turning nervously*]. What ——?

FRAYNE [*looking out*]. Isn't this your friend, Captain Bastling?

QUEX. Bastling?

FRAYNE. At that window?

[FRAYNE *moves away to the circular table and sniffs at a bottle of scent.* QUEX *goes to the window*]

QUEX [*looking out*]. Yes. What's old Napier up to there?

SOPHY [*guiltily*]. I — I heard Captain Bastling mention that he was thinking of having his hand read by Mr. Valma some time or other.

QUEX. No! ha, ha, ha! [*Leaving the window*] He doesn't see me; I won't disturb him. [*To* SOPHY, *jocularly*] A convenient arrangement — it is possible to transfer one's self from the manicurist to the palmist without the trouble of putting on one's gloves.

SOPHY. Ha, ha! y—yes.

QUEX [*pausing on his way to the entrance*]. Miss Fullgarney, may I ask if you and Mr. Valma have fixed upon the date of your marriage?

SOPHY. Oh, we sha'n't get married yet awhile — not for a year or more, I fancy.

QUEX [*graciously*]. In that case, I shall hope to have the pleasure, and the privilege, of being present at your wedding — with my wife.

SOPHY [*hanging her head*]. Thank you.

QUEX. Chick —— [*He goes out*]

FRAYNE [*turning to* SOPHY *with dignity*]. Miss Fullgarney, one thing I desire to say. It is that your behaviour this morning completely obliterates — the ——

[*He is cut short by another hiccup and, with a bow, withdraws.* POLLITT *appears at the window.* SOPHY *goes to the entrance, and watches the departure of* QUEX *and* FRAYNE. POLLITT *enters the room. The door-gong sounds*]

POLLITT. Sophy.

SOPHY [*turning*]. Oh! Valma, dear?

POLLITT [*with a heavy brow*]. Captain Bastling is waiting at my place, for Miss Eden.

SOPHY [*subdued*]. Is he?

POLLITT. Dearest, during my brief but, I pride myself, honourable association with palmistry, this is the first time my rooms have been used for this sort of game.

SOPHY. This sort of game?

POLLITT. Other Professors have stooped to it, but I — oh, no, it is playing palmistry a little bit too low down.

SOPHY [*unhappily*]. Surely it's quite harmless, love — a couple of young people meeting to say good-by.

POLLITT. From what you've told me, I greatly doubt that it *will* be good-by.

SOPHY. D—d—do you?

POLLITT [*hotly*]. Anyhow I resent *your* being the go-between of this gallant captain and a girl betrothed to another man — you who are naturally such a thorough lady!

SOPHY. Oh — oh, Valma —— !

[*She drops her head upon his shoulder and whimpers*]

POLLITT. Dearest, what have I said?

SOPHY. Valma, I've made up my mind. I intend to do exactly what you wish, in the future, in everything. I'm going to give up squatting down here manicuring gentlemen ——

POLLITT. Sophy!

SOPHY. And shall simply sail about these rooms, overlooking my girls in the plainest of silks. And never again will I interfere in an underhand way in other people's affairs on any account whatever. [*Putting her arms round his neck*] Yes, you *shall* find me a lady — a lady ——

POLLITT [*tenderly*]. Ah ——! [*The door-gong sounds. She raises her head and dries her eyes hurriedly*] Is that Miss Eden?

[*He crosses to the window as she goes to the entrance.* MISS LIMBIRD *appears*]

MISS LIMBIRD. [*To* SOPHY] Here's Miss Eden.

SOPHY [*with a nod*]. Give me half a minute with her; then I'm at liberty. [MISS LIMBIRD *disappears.* SOPHY *comes to* POLLITT] I'll send Muriel across directly.

[*He departs.* MISS LIMBIRD *returns and, holding the portière aside, admits* MURIEL. MURIEL *is wearing a veil.* MISS LIMBIRD *withdraws.* SOPHY *meets* MURIEL; *they kiss each other undemonstratively*]

SOPHY [*constrainedly*]. Well, darling?

MURIEL [*in the same way*]. Well, Sophy?

SOPHY. You're here, then?

MURIEL. As you see.

SOPHY. Any difficulty?

MURIEL [*in a hard voice*]. No. The Duchess and Mrs. Jack were coming to town shopping, and Lady Owbridge proposed that she and I should tack ourselves on to them.

SOPHY. How have you got rid of 'em?

MURIEL. Spoken the truth, for once — my head really does throb terribly. They think I've run in here to sit quietly with you while they —— [*Suddenly*] Oh, be quick, Sophy!

SOPHY. Quick, dear?

MURIEL. Why don't you tell me?

SOPHY. Tell you ——?

MURIEL. About last night — this woman ——

SOPHY. Her Grace?

MURIEL. Yes, yes.

SOPHY. Oh, why, I haven't anything to tell, darling.

MURIEL. Haven't anything to——?

SOPHY. You see, I couldn't help remembering what you'd called me — mean, and despicable, and all the rest of it; and the feeling came over me that you were right, that I had been sneaky. And so, after I'd attended to her Grace, I — I went straight to bed.

MURIEL [*sitting*]. Oh, yes. Then you didn't attempt to — to watch?

SOPHY. No.

MURIEL [*faintly*]. Oh!

SOPHY. Aren't you glad?

MURIEL. Glad!

SOPHY. Why, you were certain that the word or two I'd overheard meant nothing wrong.

MURIEL. I said so.

SOPHY. Said so!

MURIEL [*turning to her with clenched hands*]. Yes, but at the same time you put the dreadful idea into my head, Sophy, and I've not been able to dismiss it for one moment since.

SOPHY [*under her breath*]. Oh!

[*Sitting*]

MURIEL [*lifting her veil*]. There! you can see what I've been going through.

SOPHY [*looking at her*]. I'm so sorry.

MURIEL [*looking at* SOPHY]. *You* look rather washed out too. Haven't you slept, either?

SOPHY [*turning her head away*]. Not over well. [*Falteringly*] Then, after all, it would have been better if I *had* spied on her?

MURIEL. Anything — even that — would have been preferable to this uncertainty.

SOPHY. [*To herself, her jaw falling*] Oh ——!

MURIEL [*looking toward the window*]. Has *he* arrived?

SOPHY. Yes.

[MURIEL *rises, then* SOPHY]

MURIEL [*producing, from her pocket, a jeweller's case and showing it to* SOPHY]. Do you like this? I've just bought it, over the way, at Gressier's.

SOPHY. For Captain Bastling?

MURIEL [*with a nod, opening the box*]. A solitaire shirt-stud.

[*She retains a neatly-folded piece of paper which is enclosed in the box and hands the box to* SOPHY]

SOPHY. Beautiful. [*Glancing at the piece of paper in* MURIEL'S *hand*] What's that?

MURIEL [*unfolding the paper carefully*]. This goes with it.

[*She holds the paper before* SOPHY]

SOPHY [*reading*]. "To Napier ——"

MURIEL [*withdrawing the paper*]. Ah, no.

SOPHY. Mayn't I?

MURIEL [*yielding the paper impulsively*]. Yes, *you* may.

[MURIEL *turns away and stands leaning upon the back of the screen-chair, with her face in her hands.* SOPHY *places the jeweller's case upon the circular table*]

SOPHY [*reading with difficulty*]. "To Napier from Muriel. I only ——" what? You *have* blotted it.

MURIEL [*with a sob*]. Have I?

SOPHY. You've been crying over it

MURIEL. Yes.

SOPHY. "I only ——" I can't read it.

MURIEL [*through her tears*].

"I only know — we loved in vain:
I only feel — Farewell! — Farewell!"

SOPHY [*in a low voice*]. Very nice, darling. [*She lays the paper tenderly upon the box and goes to* MURIEL. *Eying her keenly*] You really *are* determined, then, to wish him good-by?

MURIEL [*turning to her and weeping upon her shoulder*]. Oh, Sophy! Sophy!

SOPHY. There, there! it'll soon be over.

MURIEL [*raising her head*]. Over! yes, yes! over!

SOPHY. And — p'r'aps it's all for the best, you know.

MURIEL. For the best!

SOPHY. What I mean is, that very likely we've both of us been a little cruel to poor Lord Quex — hard on him ——

MURIEL [*indignantly*]. *You* say this to me! [*Distractedly*] *You* say this, after having poisoned my mind and given me an awful night of sleeplessness and doubt. Yesterday I was as firm as a rock; to-day I'm as weak as water again. [*Facing* SOPHY *with flashing eyes*] Ah, I tell you honestly you'd better not let me meet Captain Bastling this morning! you'd better not let me see him!

[*The door-gong sounds.* BASTLING *appears at the window, and looks into the room*]

SOPHY [*whose back is toward the window, soothingly*]. No, no, you sha'n't go across to Valma's while you're like this. I'll make an excuse for you to Captain Bastling ——

BASTLING [*at the window*]. Muriel!

MURIEL [*passing* SOPHY *swiftly*]. Napier!

SOPHY [*holding her arm*]. Darling —

MURIEL [*freeing herself*]. Release me, Sophy! release me! ah ——!

[*She joins* BASTLING *and they disappear. As* SOPHY *goes to the window and looks out after them,* QUEX *enters, followed by* FRAYNE]

QUEX [*glancing round the room*]. Miss Fullgarney ——

SOPHY [*turning sharply*]. Hey? [*Blankly*] Oh — my lord ——!

QUEX. I am compelled to intrude upon you again. I have just met Lady Owbridge, with her Grace and Mrs. Eden in Sackville Street. My aunt sends me with a message to Miss Eden.

SOPHY [*confused*]. M—m—Miss Eden?

QUEX. Mrs. Eden has proposed a lunch at Prince's, provided that Miss Eden feels equal to — [*Looking about him again*] Where is Miss Eden?

SOPHY. Where?

QUEX. She is here — with you.

SOPHY. N—no.

QUEX. No?

SOPHY [*with a gulp*]. *I* haven't seen anything of her.

QUEX [*in an altered tone*]. Really?

SOPHY. No.

QUEX [*calmly*]. Strange.

[*He walks away and joins* FRAYNE. SOPHY *stealthily closes and fastens the window*]

QUEX. [*In a low voice, to* FRAYNE] Chick —

FRAYNE. Eh?

QUEX. Miss Eden *is* here. Why is the Fullgarney telling me this falsehood?

FRAYNE. You will remember I was positive she would sell you before she'd done with you.

QUEX [*gripping* FRAYNE'S *arm*]. Don't! [*Advancing to* SOPHY — *politely*] I understood from my aunt, Miss Fullgarney, that her ladyship left Miss Eden at Gressier's, the jeweller's, less than half an hour ago.

SOPHY [*fussing with the objects upon the cabinet and the manicure table*]. Oh?

QUEX. Miss Eden had some little commission to discharge at Gressier's, and intended coming across to you immediately afterward.

SOPHY [*quickly*]. Ah, then she hasn't finished her business at Gressier's yet.

QUEX. Yes, because I looked in at the shop on my way here.

SOPHY. Funny. I can't imagine where she's taken herself to.

QUEX [*earnestly*]. Miss Fullgarney ——

SOPHY. My lord?

QUEX. I thought we had become good friends, you and I ——?

SOPHY. So we have, I hope.

QUEX. And that you were desirous of rendering me a service?

SOPHY. Well, aren't I, my lord?

QUEX. Are you? You *know* that Miss Eden came to you directly she left Gressier's. You *know* she did.

SOPHY [*after a pause — drawing a deep breath*]. Yes, I — I own it.

QUEX [*reproachfully*]. Ah, Miss Fullgarney!

SOPHY. She *has* been in, and I *have* done you the service I promised.

QUEX [*calmly*]. You have?

SOPHY. Indeed I have, as true as I stand here. [*Steadying herself*] But the fact is — the fact is Miss Eden had a purchase to make that she didn't wish the ladies to interfere over, and — and she has run out for ten minutes. If your lordship must know where she is, she's in the Burlington.

QUEX [*very quietly*]. Oh, she has run out for a few minutes?

SOPHY. She might be a quarter of an hour.

QUEX. Not *run* out; *flown* out, at one of these windows.

SOPHY [*faintly*]. One of these windows?

QUEX [*pointing to the entrance*]. She has not gone out by the door.

SOPHY. What do you mean?

QUEX. Your young ladies assured me just now that Miss Eden was in this room with you. [FRAYNE, *possessed of an idea, has gone to the door in the partition. He now raps at the door gently*] No, no, Chick — please! we are not policemen.

FRAYNE [*opening the door a few inches*]. Miss Eden, I regret to learn you are suffering from headache.

SOPHY [*indignantly*]. Well, of all the liberties ——!

QUEX [*angrily*]. Frayne!

FRAYNE. May I tell you of an unfailing remedy — ? [*He peeps into the private room, then withdraws his head, and says to* QUEX] No.

SOPHY [*flouncing up to* FRAYNE, *and speaking volubly and violently*]. Now, look here, sir, I'm a busy woman — as busy and as hard-working a woman as any in London. Because you see things a bit slack Ascot week, it doesn't follow that my books, and a hundred little matters, don't want attending to. [*Sitting at the desk and opening and closing the books noisily*] And I'm certainly not going to have gentlemen, whoever they may be, marching into my place, and taking possession of it, and doubting my word, and opening and shutting doors, exactly as if they were staying in a common hotel. I'd have you to know that my establishment isn't conducted on *that* principle.

[QUEX *has been standing, with compressed lips and a frown upon his face, leaning upon the back of the chair near the circular table. During* SOPHY'S *harangue his eyes fall upon the jeweller's case and the scrap of paper lying open upon it. He stares at the writing for a moment, then comes to the table and picks up both the case and the paper*]

FRAYNE. [*To* SOPHY, *while this is going on*] My good lady, a little candor on your part ——

SOPHY. I don't understand what you're hinting at by "a little candor." You've already been told where Miss Eden is, and anybody who knows me knows that if I say a thing ——

FRAYNE. But when your young ladies declare ——

SOPHY. I'm really not responsible for the sayings and doings of a parcel of stupid girls. If they didn't see Miss Eden go out they were asleep, and if they weren't asleep they're blind; and as I've explained till I'm hoarse, I'm very busy this morning, and I should be extremely obliged to you two gentlemen if you'd kindly go away and call again a little later.

QUEX. Chick.

FRAYNE. Eh?

QUEX. I want you.

[FRAYNE *comes to* QUEX, *who hands him the jeweller's case and the slip of paper*]

SOPHY [*fussing over her books, oblivious of what is transpiring*]. As if the difficulty of conducting a business of this kind isn't sufficient without extra bothers and worries being brought down on one's head! What with one's enormous rent, and rotten debts, it's heartbreaking! Here's a woman here, on my books, who runs an account for fifteen months, with the face of an angel, and no more intends to pay me than to jump over St. Paul's ——

QUEX [*who again has possession of the jeweller's case and the paper*]. Miss Fullgarney ——

SOPHY. What now, my lord? Upon my word, it is *too* bad ——!

QUEX. Please come here.

SOPHY [*coming forward — now on the verge of tears*]. After such a night as I've had, too. I never could do without my full eight hours ——

QUEX. Be silent!

SOPHY. What!

QUEX. Miss Eden and Captain Bastling ——

SOPHY. Eh?

QUEX. They are acquaintances — friends. [*With a stamp of the foot*] They are on terms of ——

SOPHY [*faintly*]. Oh!

QUEX [*pointing to the window*]. She is with him at this moment — there.

SOPHY [*unsteadily*]. Whatever are you saying, my lord? [*Discovering that he has the jeweller's case and the paper*] Ah ——!

QUEX. Yes, I found these upon the table. [*She advances, to take them from him*] Miss Eden left them here — forgot them?

SOPHY [*in a murmur*]. Yes.

[*He gives them to her. She puts them into her pocket and sits*]

QUEX. Come! tell me.

SOPHY. You — you are not the only one in the field, my lord.

QUEX. So I conclude.

SOPHY. Have pity on her!

QUEX [*sternly*]. How dare you!

SOPHY. It's more my fault than hers.

QUEX. Continue.

SOPHY. She has wanted to stop it, hating herself for being deceitful, but I — I've encouraged her, egged her on.

QUEX. Yes.

SOPHY. They've been in the habit of meeting here at my place.

QUEX [*again pointing to the window*]. In this fellow's rooms — Mr. Valma's ——

SOPHY [*rising*]. No, no. They've never met there, till this morning. But he — young Bastling — he's going away, abroad, in a fortnight or so, and he wished to say good-by to her quietly.

QUEX [*turning toward the window fiercely*]. Ah ——!

SOPHY [*laying her hand upon his arm*]. Be careful, my lord!

QUEX [*looking at her*]. Careful?

SOPHY [*significantly*]. I know how she feels to-day. If you *want* to send her to Hong-Kong with Captain Bastling ——

[QUEX *hesitates for a moment, then crosses to* FRAYNE, *to whom he speaks apart*]

QUEX. Chick! how shall I act?

FRAYNE [*dismally*]. Dear old chap, to be quite honest with you, I was not wholly captivated by Miss Eden when you presented me yesterday.

QUEX. Tshah! What shall I do? wait?

FRAYNE. In any event, of course, the man's head has to be punched. But it might be wise to delay doing it until ——

QUEX. [*To* SOPHY] You spoke, a little while ago, of giving me "a chance." I see now what was in your mind. There's a risk, then, that this good-by may not be final?

SOPHY [*stammeringly*]. W—well, I ——

QUEX [*sharply*]. Eh?

SOPHY [*breaking down*]. Oh, my lord, recollect, she's not much more than a girl!

QUEX. No, she is not much more than a girl; but you — though you and she are of the same age — *you* are a woman. *You* know your world, upstairs and downstairs, boudoir and kitchen. Yet you own you have encouraged her in this, made her clandestine meetings with this penniless beggar possible. You —! you deserve to be whipped, Miss Fullgarney — whipped!

SOPHY [*facing him*]. Come, my lord! not so fast! After all, remember, Captain Bastling may be poor, but he's Miss Eden's match in other ways.

QUEX. Match?

SOPHY. Young, and good-looking. Oh, and isn't it natural ——?

QUEX. Quite natural — quite. [*Turning to* FRAYNE] Chick, what an ass I've been; what fools we old chaps are, all of us! Why, if I had led the life of a saint, it would only be necessary for a man like this Bastling to come along, to knock me out. Good lord, how clear it is, when it's brought home to you in this fashion! It isn't the scamp, the roué, a girl shies at; it's the *old* scamp, the *old* roué. She'll take the young one, the blackguard with a smooth skin and a bright eye, directly he raises a hand — take him without a murmur, money-hunter though he may be. Take him! by Jove, she leaps into his arms!

FRAYNE. D'ye mean that Bastling ——?

QUEX. Napier Bastling! [*Breaking into a prolonged peal of laughter*] Ha, ha, ha, ha! Chick, he's just what *I* was at eight-and-twenty. Ha, ha, ha! what I was — and worse, damn him! — and she loves him.

SOPHY [*who has been listening with wide-open eyes and parted lips*]. It's not true! it isn't true!

QUEX [*turning to her*]. Isn't it! You think so, hey? No, I suppose

you haven't experimentalized upon *him;* you haven't spied on him, and tempted him as you tempted me. You have never got *him* into a quiet corner and stuck your impudent face in his. If you had ——

SOPHY. Oh! he wouldn't ——!

[FRAYNE *has walked away;* QUEX *now joins him*]

QUEX [*as he goes*]. Wouldn't he! ha, ha, ha! [*To* FRAYNE, *fiercely*] What the devil am I to do, Chick?

FRAYNE. Punch his head.

SOPHY [*panting*]. Oh! oh! [BASTLING, *indistinctly seen through the muslin blinds, appears at the window. He raps gently upon the window frame.* SOPHY *glances at the window*] Eh —? [*Under her breath*] Oh! [*She goes swiftly to* QUEX and FRAYNE, *seizes them by the arms, and pushes them toward the door in the partition, saying agitatedly*] Wait there! don't come out, or make a noise ——

QUEX. What are you up to now?

SOPHY. Stay here till I find out what's happened. Oh, I'll do what I can for you!

[*They enter the private room and she closes the door. Then she returns to the window, unfastens it, and retreats.* BASTLING *pushes open the window and comes in*]

BASTLING [*advancing to her excitedly*]. Ah, Sophy! [*Looking round*] Anyone about?

SOPHY [*pointing to the left*]. All my girls are in there. Where is she?

BASTLING. Next door. She's sitting down, calming herself — having her cry out.

SOPHY. Crying!

BASTLING. She's all right — awfully happy. I told her I'd come and tell you.

SOPHY. Tell me ——!

BASTLING. It's settled.

SOPHY. Settled!

BASTLING. She's mine, Sophy.

SOPHY [*with a gasp*]. Yours!

BASTLING. We're going to be married at once — next week. We shall need your help still. Of course, it must be a secret marriage. She will follow me out by-and-by.

SOPHY [*nodding dully*]. Oh, yes.

BASTLING. Why, aren't you glad about it? [*Smilingly*] Don't you congratulate us?

SOPHY. C—certainly.

BASTLING. Good. And — [*shaking hands with her*] thanks to *you.* [*Releasing her hand*] Thanks.

SOPHY [*nerving herself for her task*]. Thanks!

BASTLING. A million of 'em. What's the matter?

SOPHY. Oh, nothing.

BASTLING. Yes, there is. Come, out with it.

SOPHY. Well — *thanks!* [*Tossing her head*] There isn't much in thanks.

BASTLING [*puzzled*]. Not much in thanks?

SOPHY [*turning away, pouting*]. *I* think not.

BASTLING [*smiling*]. Oh, I know I owe a tremendous deal to the pretty manicurist, and I don't intend to forget it. Just now I'm rather hard-up [*glancing toward the window*], but I shall be in funds before long ——

SOPHY [*turning to him with genuine indignation*]. Oh!

BASTLING. What do you want, then?

SOPHY [*after a moment's hesitation, sidling up to him*]. Not money.

BASTLING. Not?

SOPHY. A little more than plain thanks, though.

BASTLING [*looking into her eyes, laughing softly*]. Ha, ha, ha!

SOPHY [*slyly*]. Ha, ha, ha!

BASTLING. Thanks — differently expressed —? [*She plays with the lapel of his coat and giggles. He takes her chin in his hand*] Ha, ha, ha! Sophy!

SOPHY. Ha, ha!

[MURIEL *appears at the open window and enters the room noiselessly. Seeing* BASTLING *and* SOPHY *together, she halts in surprise*]

BASTLING [*whose back is to the window*]. I say — mind, no tales.

SOPHY [*looking at* MURIEL *steadily over* BASTLING'S *shoulder*] Likely I'd split on you, isn't it?

BASTLING. Honour bright?

SOPHY. Oh, if you've any doubt ——

[*He raises her face to his and kisses her upon the lips warmly and lingeringly. She goes back a step or two, still gazing fixedly at* MURIEL]

BASTLING. Eh ——?

[*Following the direction of her eyes, he turns and encounters* MURIEL. *The three stand for a moment or two without movement*]

BASTLING [*after a pause, speaking in a low voice, his eyes avoiding* MURIEL'S]. Well — ha! — I suppose every man makes a big mistake at least once in his life. I've made mine. At the same time, I — I — [*hurriedly*] — oh, I'll write.

[*With a slight, quick bow to* MURIEL, *he wheels round sharply and goes out*]

SOPHY [*wiping his kiss from her lips*]. The wretch! the wretch!

[*The door-gong sounds*]

MURIEL [*covering her eyes with her hand and uttering a low moan*]. Oh ——!

SOPHY [*hanging her head*]. You see, darling, yesterday at Fauncey Court, I — I tried it on with Lord Quex, and he behaved like a gentleman. So the notion struck me that I'd treat the young man in the same way, just to see what *he* was made of, and — well, I'm glad you came in. You might never have believed me.

MURIEL [*in a hard voice*]. The shirt-stud — the stuff I wrote — I left them with you ——

SOPHY [*producing them*]. I found them after you'd gone.

[MURIEL *takes the piece of paper and tears it into small pieces.* SOPHY *offers her the jeweller's case*]

MURIEL [*haughtily*]. Take that back to Gressier's this afternoon, please, and tell them I've changed my mind. Say I'll have a little silver collar for my dog, in its place.

[*She sinks into the screen-chair, with her eyes closed. Slipping the case into her pocket,* SOPHY *tip-toes up to the door in the partition; she opens it and beckons to* QUEX, *who appears with* FRAYNE]

SOPHY. [*To* QUEX, *in a whisper*] Phsst! It's all nicely settled. She's said good-by to him for good. What a fuss you made about nothing!

[*She points to the screen-chair; he approaches* MURIEL. SOPHY *and* FRAYNE *talk together*]

QUEX [*softly*]. Muriel ——

MURIEL [*opening her eyes, startled*]. Quex!

QUEX [*brightly*]. I came up to town this morning with Sir Chichester. We've just met Aunt Julia, and the rest of 'em, in Sackville Street. Mrs. Jack clamours for lunch at Prince's. What do you say?

MURIEL [*passing her hand across her eyes*]. Thanks. It'll be jolly.

QUEX [*gayly*]. Ah!

MURIEL [*laying her hand upon his sleeve*]. Quex ——

QUEX. Eh?

MURIEL [*rising, and speaking in a low, appealing voice*]. Give me your word you have been loyal to me, down to your very thought, since our engagement.

QUEX [*earnestly*]. Muriel, I ——

MURIEL. Hush! [*Giving him her hand*] I believe you. [*The door-gong sounds*] And, look here! I haven't been quite fair, or generous, to you, I am afraid. But I am going to be different ——

QUEX. After to-day!

MURIEL. From this moment. Harry ——

QUEX. Hey?

MURIEL. I won't keep you till the end of the year. Marry me, and have done with it, directly the season is over, and take me away.

QUEX [*bending over her hand*]. Good heavens ——!

[MISS LIMBIRD *holds the portière aside and admits* LADY OWBRIDGE, *the* DUCHESS OF STROOD, *and* MRS. EDEN. MISS LIMBIRD *then returns to her desk.* QUEX *goes to* LADY OWBRIDGE, *takes her arm, and leads her forward*] Aunt Julia! aunt! my dear Aunt Julia!

[*The* DUCHESS *joins* FRAYNE. MRS. EDEN *comes to* MURIEL *and receives the news of the hastened marriage.* SOPHY *moves away to the window*]

QUEX [*excitedly, to* LADY OWBRIDGE]. Oh, my dear aunt!

LADY OWBRIDGE. What ails you, Henry?

QUEX. Muriel! she — she — she's going to marry me!

LADY OWBRIDGE. I hope so.

QUEX. But at the end of the season! a month hence! a month, a month, a month!

LADY OWBRIDGE. My dear boy! Heaven prosper your union! Muriel ——

MRS. EDEN. [*To* LADY OWBRIDGE] Isn't this glorious news, Lady Owbridge? But I always thought it unwise to protract the engagement. You never know *what* may happen, do you? I must tell the dear Duchess ——

[*She joins the* DUCHESS *and* FRAYNE, *and chatters to them*]

LADY OWBRIDGE. [*To* MURIEL, *in a low voice*] Muriel, you are right. In this life, if you have anything to pardon, pardon quickly. Slow forgiveness is little better than no forgiveness.

MRS. EDEN [*coming to* QUEX]. Congratulate you.

QUEX. Thanks.

[LADY OWBRIDGE *moves away, joining the* DUCHESS, *as* MRS. EDEN *returns to* MURIEL]

MRS. EDEN [*kissing* MURIEL]. You sensible girl!

[FRAYNE *comes to* QUEX]

FRAYNE. [*To* QUEX, *mournfully*] Old chap, this is shockingly sudden.

QUEX. Ha, ha!

FRAYNE. However, we must contrive, you and I, to pass one more evening together before the event.

QUEX. One! many!

FRAYNE. No, no, I mean a buster, Harry; a regular night of it ——

QUEX. Good lord! go away!

[MRS. EDEN *joins* LADY OWBRIDGE *as* FRAYNE *advances to* MURIEL]

FRAYNE [*taking* MURIEL'S *hand*]. Dear young lady, you are about to become the wife of one of the best. There are not many of us left; we are a dwindling band, Miss Eden ——

[*The* DUCHESS *comes to* QUEX]

DUCHESS. [*To* QUEX, *softly*] Sincere congratulations. [*He bows stiffly*] At any time, you know, when you return to England ——

QUEX [*eying her sternly*]. Yes?

DUCHESS. After your honeymoon ——

QUEX. Yes?

DUCHESS. Should you feel *ennuyé* ——

QUEX. I!

DUCHESS. The air at Burwarton never failed to exhilarate you. So pray do not forget ——

QUEX [*indignantly*]. Duchess!

DUCHESS [*sweetly*]. That poor dear Strood would be pleased to see you. [FRAYNE *joins* LADY OWBRIDGE *and* MRS. EDEN *as the* DUCHESS *advances to* MURIEL] Dear Miss Eden, may your married life be as beautiful, as serene, as my own!

MURIEL [*frankly*]. Thank you, Duchess.

LADY OWBRIDGE. We shall be a happy party at luncheon. Shall we go, Duchess? Muriel — Henry — [QUEX *joins* MURIEL. SOPHY *is eying* MURIEL *wistfully.* MISS LIMBIRD *holds the portière aside, to allow the visitors to pass out*] Good-morning, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY. Good-morning, my lady.

DUCHESS. Miss Fullgarney ——

SOPHY. Good-by, your Grace.

[*The* DUCHESS *and* LADY OWBRIDGE *go out*]

FRAYNE [*following them with* MRS. EDEN]. Good-day, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY. Good-day, sir.

MRS. EDEN. Morning, Sophy.

SOPHY. Morning, Mrs. Eden.

[FRAYNE *and* MRS. EDEN *go out*]

QUEX [*following them with* MURIEL]. Good-morning, Miss Fullgarney.

SOPHY [*blankly*]. G—good-morning, my lord. [QUEX *and* MURIEL *go out, followed by* MISS LIMBIRD. SOPHY *stands aghast, her bosom heaving*] Oh! oh! oh! [*The door-gong sounds.* POLLITT *appears at the window.* SOPHY *is wringing her hands*] Oh ——!

POLLITT [*entering*]. My love! what's the matter?

SOPHY. She — she's left me, without a word!

POLLITT. She?

SOPHY. Muriel — without so much as wishing me good-morning. [*With a sob*] Oh! when I've done what I can for everybody!

[*The portière is pulled aside and* MURIEL *returns, unaccompanied, and comes to* SOPHY'S *side swiftly*]

MURIEL. [*To* SOPHY] Forgive me. You did it for the best. [*Kissing her*] I'm sorry ——

SOPHY [*throwing her arms round* MURIEL'S *neck*] Oh! my darling —! [MURIEL *runs out.* SOPHY *goes to* POLLITT *and drops her head upon his breast, restfully*] Ah! *that's* all right.

[*The door-gong sounds finally*]

THE END

THE SILVER BOX

(1906)

By John Galsworthy

JOHN GALSWORTHY

John Galsworthy is a dramatist with a tremendous sense of life. More than any other English writer of the present generation, he has far-seeing vision, and he is true to humanity. Unlike his contemporaries, he is not alone concerned with the thesis drama, though a thesis interests him. Unlike his contemporaries, Granville Barker most notably, he is not worried about a new literary form. It is the palpitant matter that concerns him; it is the life quality that he is after.

Galsworthy is a writer of power and of distinction. He is, at the same time, a thinker and an artist. Because he thinks in an orderly fashion, people have accused him, in his mere statement of facts, of being coldly judicial. Yet, always, there is a special arrangement of these facts, which proclaims him to be an artist with selective reticence. After reading "The Eldest Son" (1912) one feels that he was writing in the old manner, not so far removed from the time of Robertson's "Caste", even though the moral question is of the modern order. Compare "The Eldest Son" with Stanley Houghton's "Hindle Wakes" (1912), both treating the same theme, and you will realize the conventionality of Galsworthy. Nevertheless, though he finds it difficult to keep away from class discussion, his sympathy has no conventional limitations. He is a man with prejudices, born of acute observation; and that, it seems, would answer the critics who say that Galsworthy is almost aloof in his statement of an argument. He is a man of large conviction, but, being an artist, primarily interested in the weighing and development of character, he does not so far obtrude his convictions as to overshadow what his characters themselves think. This is a characteristic which is not Shavian.

Galsworthy could never take English society, as it was before the War, content only to paint a realistic picture. He could never have written Barker's "The Madras House", — cleverly pictorial, and minute in its observation, — for the simple reason that Galsworthy couples with his observation the spirit of a reformer and the heart of a poet. He has glimpses of life far above and beyond English life; his dominant attitude is fearless facing of the facts. And there is in him a high realization of a power above man — a power which places humanity in proper relationship with the infinite.

> As a man lives and thinks [says Galsworthy], so will he write. But it is certain that to the makings of good drama, as to the practise of every other art, there must be brought an almost passionate love of discipline, a white-heat of self-respect, a desire to make the truest, fairest, best thing in one's power; and that to these must be added an eye that does not flinch.

This is measure of Galsworthy, the artist, and of Galsworthy the man.

The mere external facts of his life are quickly stated. Born in 1867, at Coombe, in Surrey, he is steeped in the traditions of Devonshire. Those who knew him personally say that in his early years he was earnest, sure, and sound. These char-

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acteristics have deepened in his work. Some say that he was neither brilliant at school, nor quick in his studies, but that whatever he learned, he learned thoroughly. His plays and his novels lack a certain quality of brilliancy, but they abound in a feeling characteristic of him, and they are never devoid of that authority which comes from learning a subject thoroughly, weighing it deeply, and pondering it long. His education was that of any English schoolboy of the day. From 1881 to 1886 he was at Harrow. Then followed three years of reading at New College, Oxford, with the bestowal of an honour degree in law. Between that time and 1890, in which year he was called to the Bar, Galsworthy continued his legal preparations, aided and abetted by his father, who was of the same profession.

Disliking the law, and having money, the son travelled the world over. Early in his adventures he met, on shipboard, the future novelist, Joseph Conrad, at that tlme serving his apprenticeship as an ordinary seaman. Between these two there sprang up a firm and lasting friendship, out of which came one of Galsworthy's most significant essays, wherein he has revealed much of his philosophy of life, born of an ironical sense of things.

It was in 1899 that Galsworthy published his first novel, "Jocelyn." As he himself has said, between then and 1904, he "acquired some first-hand knowledge of the conditions of Capital and Labor." Later, these ideas were utilized in "Strife." The habit of pondering over a theme must be characteristic of the mental habit of the man. "Justice" was pondered over for two years before it was written, during the months of August and September, 1906.

Any man who holds serious ideas concerning art and life, expresses them definitely and concretely at some time and in some place. There is not a page of Galsworthy's novels that does not contain running commentary on the facts of life, viewing economic and social conditions in relation to types of people who have, on the one hand, gained his sympathies, or, on the other hand, excited his scorn. He is equally as serious regarding his mission as an artist, and on many occasions he has expressed opinions regarding the functions of his profession.

Nowhere is Pinero better reported concerning drama than in his essay on Stevenson. He speaks therein of the feverish toil and mental tension of the dramatist's work, in comparison with the work of the novelist. There is no feverish tension in the work of John Galsworthy. There is a brooding sense which comes with the spiritual tension of thinking. Galsworthy has compassion. Even his irony has a certain amount of gentleness in its strength, and shows none of the hard, crass sting of Shaw about it. There is a certain terrible meekness about Galsworthy's social criticism, distinctive of his temperament. He is, in his social philosophy, an evolutionist rather than a revolutionist. In his essay on "Some Platitudes Concerning Drama", contained in his volume, "The Inn of Tranquillity", he has much to say concerning the harmony of the temperament of man, the truthfulness of character and condition, the steadfastness of idea and purpose in dramatic writing. But this essay does not contain as much of the inner spiritual fervour of Galsworthy as does his critique on Conrad. Here he is much more concerned with the cosmic spirit than with the irony of things — a philosophy of life which permeates all his writing.

From first to last, one must say of Galsworthy that he is thoroughly sincere.

> Sincerity bars no themes [he writes], it only demands that the dramatist's moods and visions should be intense enough to keep him absorbed; that he

should have something to say so engrossing to himself that he has no need to stray here and there and gather purple plums to eke out what was intended for an apple tart. Here is the heart of the matter: you cannot get sincere drama out of those who do not see and feel with sufficient fervour; and you cannot get good, sincere drama out of persons with a weakness for short cuts. There are no short cuts to the good in art.

It is the fundamental closeness of Galsworthy to the universe that marks him as superior to his fellow craftsmen in civic worth and influence. In fact, there are some of Galsworthy's critics who claim that he is too superior a person; that in his mental attitude towards human problems, he often lacks the human quality himself. He has the ability of seeing life in terms of other people, but he likewise has the ability of questioning life in terms of his own relation toward life. Because he awakens in us whatever social conscience we may possess, does not necessarily relieve Galsworthy of being responsible to his own social conscience. His is not a negative criticism, in the sense that Matthew Arnold's criticism of life in his poetry is negative. Whereas Matthew Arnold questions — "Wouldst thou be as these are, live as they", and contents himself with the mere challenge without telling us how we must live in order to be like the stars, Galsworthy makes his statement, and backs it up with all that social and economic irony characteristic of him.

So intent is he in his process of constructive criticism, that his novels are social essays, wherein how the characters think, and what they think, are of more importance than what the characters actually do, and what they say. This aloofness of Galsworthy is exacting, not only on his reading public, but on himself. Note the expression of it in one of his prayers, published in his volume of poems:

> If on a spring night I went by,
> And God was standing there,
> What is the prayer that I would cry to him?
> This is the prayer:
> " O Lord of Courage grave,
> O Master of this night of spring!
> Make firm in me a heart too brave
> To ask Thee anything."

In what sense does Galsworthy's pessimism differ from Arnold's? There is an eternal note of sadness in Arnold's questionings, with no sense of individual responsibility. There is a persistent note of irony in Galsworthy's questioning, with an overpowering sense of individual responsibility.

His plays contain essence. They contain atmosphere which arises, not so much from condition marking the outward picture, as from the condition of the inner life of those most concerned with the problem. Yet, he is not obscure. At times one might say he was incomplete. But none of his plays breaks off as incompletely as Granville Barker's "The Voysey Inheritance", wherein the curtain falls just as we want to know what the son will do with the fortune he has inherited.

Read John Galsworthy as he would have you read Joseph Conrad. Remember that there is a scheme of things much larger, much more important than the scheme of man's small life, and then some of Galsworthy's palpitant humanity will take its proper proportion. He is always sounding the irony which shows the smallness of man. Note in "The Freelands" this bit of nature description:

> The fields and hills seemed to mock the scars of road and ditch and furrow scraped on them, to mock at barriers of hedge and wall — between the green land and the white sky was conspiracy to disregard those small activities.

It is the fear of seeing ourselves a mere drop in the scheme of the universe which produces the irony of things. It is our self-sufficiency which creates human misery and human barriers. It is necessary, therefore, for us to enlighten ourselves on all things pertaining to life, that we may see clearly whither we are tending, and may determine what we must aspire to be.

It is in the irony of things that Mr. Galsworthy, as an essayist, as a novelist, and as a dramatist, is groping for an expression of his own religious belief. He writes:

> I cannot help thinking that historians, looking back from the far future, will recall this age as the Third Renaissance. We who are lost in it, working or looking on, can neither tell what we are doing nor where standing; but we cannot help observing that, just as in the Greek Renaissance, worn-out Pagan orthodoxy was penetrated by new philosophy; just as in the Italian Renaissance, Pagan philosophy, reasserting itself, fertilized again an already too inbred Christian creed; so now Orthodoxy fertilized by Science is producing a fresh and fuller conception of life — a love of Perfection, not for hope of reward, not for fear of punishment, but for Perfection's sake. . . .
>
> And it [the Western World] began to see that this Perfection, cosmically, was nothing but perfect Equanimity and Harmony; and in human relations, nothing but perfect Love and Justice. And Perfection began to glow before the eyes of the western world like a new star, whose light touched with glamour all things as they came forth from Mystery, till to Mystery they were ready to return.

This was written before August, 1914.

The following statement is explanation of what Galsworthy means by the irony of things:

> If men were not disharmonic, there would be no irony of things. We jut out everywhere, and fail to see how we are jutting out. We seek solutions, raise our flags, work our arms and legs loyally in the isolated fields that come within our vision, but, having no feeling for the whole, the work we do is departmental. The war of the departments is the game we understand; we spend our lives keeping up the ball and taking down the score. The race of men is a race of partisans feeding their pigeon-holes with contradictory reports of life, and when a fellow comes and lays a summary on the desk, they look at him askance; but the future pays attention, for the impartial is all that it has time for.

Does not this, in a way, show just wherein Galsworthy, educated in the atmosphere of class distinction, himself ceases to be departmental? There are many who say that when, in 1910, "Justice" appealed so strongly to the Home Secretary, the Hon. Winston Churchill, as to reform the English prison system, the dramatist had set forth specifically to reform a particular evil. But we have, from the author's own self, the confession that he aimed even higher:

> To present a picture of the general blindness of justice . . . to elucidate the true proportions of the problem of Society face to face with the erring individual.

In "Strife", both *Roberts* and *Anthony* epitomize class; they each have consuming faults of character and of purpose; in their different ways they hold out for principles which are as nothing beside the human misery and want they create. Neither man sees the irony of things — which once seen might have brought them both to a compromise. So deeply ingrained is this ironical feeling for class, that we are inclined to become a little impatient when we find Galsworthy continually using the artificial barriers as a contrast — a contrast which was strictly characteristic of him before the War.

In "The Silver Box" (1906), in "Strife" (1909), in "Justice" (1910), in "The Eldest Son", in "The Fugitive" (1913), it is class idea against class idea, as persistently upheld as it is in any of his novels.

He is not rich in varying idea. He is rich in attitude. One is surprised how little there is in the actual framework of a Galsworthy drama to mark it as big. It is beneath the surface that Galsworthy's characters live and breathe, and it is this which makes them alive. Even in "The Eldest Son", so thoroughly English in its conventional arrangements and contrast, there is a sense of life, and the *dramatis personæ* talk in consonance with their characters.

In handling class, Galsworthy's aim is to show the futility of class in the scheme of things. He paints both sides of the picture. In "The Silver Box", he adopts a dramatic way of indicating that there is no one civil law for all people, but that there are separate laws for each class, rich and poor. Essentially, Galsworthy is democratic; he has infinite sympathy for those struggling amidst the limitations of class, and in consequence he has escaped into the free air with a clearer vision. It is this democratic attitude toward life which made him, during 1917, refuse a knighthood among the Birthday Honours of the King.

No one can understand Galsworthy who has not first read his poignant prose sketches, contained in "The Motley." Subscribers to the London *Nation* had cause to delight in such bits of reality as "A Child", "Comfort", and "Fashion", commentary notes afterwards worked, in larger strokes, into his novels, of which "A Man of Property" — the epic of possession, "The Country House", — a picture of the squire class, "Fraternity" — a record of culture and culture's class distinctions, and "The Patrician" — a satire on English aristocracy, are types.

The emotional quality which one detected in "The Dark Flower", and which one felt to be harbouring a passionate note representing the unhealthy phase of Galsworthy's art, was tempered, in "The Freelands", by his social interest in the claims of the new generation, and it was, to some extent, held in check, in his play, "The Fugitive", by the tragedy of class education, which unfitted his heroine to cope with life. But in his later novels, a strange element of emotionalism seems to have developed more and more.

Since the outbreak of the War, Galsworthy has been working in the London Intelligence Office. He has visited the different Fronts, and has commented on the various social and spiritual phases of the conflict, showing his immense fairness, and his ability to discover spiritual currents from the facts before him. There is no doubt he is bringing to bear on the world's great upheaval that same sense of

the irony of things which has previously dominated his work. For Galsworthy has always been quickly observant and quickly responsive.

It is hard to believe that the man who wrote "Justice" could ever be accused of over-sentimentalism, yet his reality has always been touched with kindness. In his small detail, one would call him an impartial observer; but, judging the whole effect, his vision is spiritually large. One never forgets his treatment. The poor child, for instance, with its dull laugh, epitomizing "the laughter in a million homes of the myriad unfed"; the slavish father sitting "without the pain of looking at a single thing"; the comfortable people who are like pigeons in the thickness of their down, but who, unlike them, "had no wings, — they never soared"; the unseeing eyes of fashion passing by "all that is organic in the world; all that is living and creating; all that is striving to be free."

In other words, after reading the essays, novels, and plays of Galsworthy, one realizes his fairness. He shows his social conscience in everything he writes. His conclusions are often incomplete. Nothing could be more feminine in that respect than "Joy" (1907) — a drama in which he did not quite succeed in depicting the selfishness of a woman torn between the love of a man and the love of her daughter by her first marriage. "Fraternity" ends almost abruptly — too palpably a slice of life. But the substance of his fervour is there. No writer has a surer way of looking from his character's angle of vision, and of presenting his character's case. This is well seen in "The Pigeon" (1912), which discusses the problem of departmental charity.

"Fraternity" holds in germ nearly all of the characteristics found in Galsworthy's plays. There are parts of "Strife" in it, parts of "The Silver Box"; there are hints of "Justice" and of "The Eldest Son;" and, as far as the sentimental attitude toward the poor is concerned, as manifest in sentimental charity, it foreshadows "The Pigeon." Situations repeat themselves in Galsworthy's plays and novels. This is not so much due to a lack of imagination or originality, as to an intensity of purpose resulting in the adoption of symbols to represent types and conditions. It is Galsworthy's mannerism.

"The Pigeon" shows the author in a newer and softer light than one finds him in "The Silver Box", "Strife", or "Justice." It marks him as a little Barriësque, and we must remember that "Fraternity" was dedicated to the creator of "Peter Pan." In "The Pigeon" there is poignant truth, clear characterization, and social warning. We find in it a diatribe against departmental evaluations. Here, also, Justice goes its machine-made way, and sentiment is pitted against a theoretical solution of poverty.

The poetical quality is uppermost in Galsworthy's nature. Refreshing beauty springs up between stern realities. The lyricism in his novels is better than the allegory in "The Little Dream", a delicate fantasy of a longing soul which learns of life's true measure and meaning. His poetry flashes red in the grey of life, as the autumn leaf amidst dying things; or else it comes out of an active soul, and finds life in struggle. His style flows with vitality, as sap flows through the channels of living things. There are inevitable expressions in his work; he squeezes the essence of existence out of the matter with which he deals.

He is essentially alive on all topics, and he is in the current of social change. With his deep-seated social sense, and with his sense of art so clearly defined, he was, before the outbreak of the War, one of the most deservedly prominent figures in the "New Drama" of England.

Yet, what Galsworthy does, though it may seem to be prompted entirely by social fervour, nearly always starts from an interesting character. Discussing "Strife" at one time, he wrote:

> My play . . . was regarded by many people as a deliberate plan to deal with the problem of capital and labour. That was not the case. They were two types of men that I had observed. Both were over strong-willed, and when they met there was necessarily violence. It happened that in the case I observed, these types represented capital and labour. The play might just as well have been political.

"The Silver Box" is selected for the present volume as representing technically one of his best constructed pieces. "Justice" is not as firmly wrought. The sheer sincerity and fairness of "Justice" are its dominant characteristics. In "The Silver Box" Galsworthy seems to have struck the very key-note of his sympathy with life. And its irony is clearly defined in its definite class distinctions.

THE SILVER BOX

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By JOHN GALSWORTHY

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CASTS OF CHARACTERS

	Court Theatre, London, September 25, 1906.	*Empire Theatre, New York, Season of 1907.*
JOHN BARTHWICK, M.P., *a wealthy Liberal*	Mr. James Hearn	Mr. Eugene Jepson
MRS. BARTHWICK, *his wife*	Miss Frances Ivor	Miss Hattie Russell
JACK BARTHWICK, *their son*	Mr. A. E. Matthews	Mr. Harrie Redding
ROPER, *their solicitor*	Mr. A. Goodsall	Mr. William Sampson
MRS. JONES, *their charwoman*	Miss Irene Rooke	Miss Ethel Barrymore
MARLOW, *their manservant*	Mr. Frederick Lloyd	Mr. William Evans
WHEELER, *their maidservant*	Miss Gertrude Henriques	Miss Anita Rothe
JONES, *the stranger within their gates*	Mr. Norman McKinnel	Mr. Bruce McRae
MRS. SEDDON, *a landlady*	Mrs. Charles Maltby	Miss Fanny L. Burt
SNOW, *a detective*	Mr. Trevor Lowe	Mr. James Kearney
JULIUS HOLDEN, *a Police Magistrate*	Mr. Athol Forde	Mr. Forrest Robinson
AN UNKNOWN LADY, *from beyond*	Miss Sydney Fairbrother	Miss Mary Nash
TWO LITTLE GIRLS, *homeless*	——	Miss Dorothy Scherer Miss Helen Mooney
LIVENS, *their father*	Mr. Edmund Gurney	Mr. Soldene Powell
RELIEVING OFFICER	Mr. Edmund Gwenn	Mr. M. B. Pollock
MAGISTRATE'S CLERK	Mr. Lewis Casson	
USHER	Mr. Norman Page	
CLERK OF COURT	——	Mr. Louis Eagan
SWEARING CLERK	——	Mr. John Adolfi
CONSTABLE	——	Mr. Harry Barker

Policemen, Clerks, and others

TIME: *The present. The action of the first two Acts takes place on Easter Tuesday; the action of the third on Easter Wednesday week.*

ACT I

SCENE I. ROCKINGHAM GATE. JOHN BARTHWICK'S DINING-ROOM.
SCENE II. THE SAME.
SCENE III. THE SAME.

ACT II

SCENE I. THE JONES'S LODGINGS, MERTHYR STREET.
SCENE II. JOHN BARTHWICK'S DINING-ROOM.

ACT III

A LONDON POLICE COURT.

THE SILVER BOX

ACT I

SCENE FIRST. — *The curtain rises on the* BARTHWICKS' *dining-room, large, modern, and well furnished; the window curtains drawn. Electric light is burning. On the large round dining-table is set out a tray with whisky, a syphon, and a silver cigarette-box. It is past midnight.*

[*A fumbling is heard outside the door. It is opened suddenly;* JACK BARTHWICK *seems to fall into the room. He stands holding by the door knob, staring before him, with a beatific smile. He is in evening dress and opera hat, and carries in his hand a sky-blue velvet lady's reticule. His boyish face is freshly coloured and clean-shaven. An overcoat is hanging on his arm*]

JACK. Hello! I've got home all ri— [*Defiantly*] Who says I sh'd never 've opened th' door without 'sistance. [*He staggers in, fumbling with the reticule. A lady's handkerchief and purse of crimson silk fall out*] Serve her joll' well right — everything droppin' out. Th' cat. I've scored her off — I've got her bag. [*He swings the reticule*] Serves her joll' well right. [*He takes a cigarette out of the silver box and puts it in his mouth*] Never gave tha' fellow anything! [*He hunts through all his pockets and pulls a shilling out; it drops and rolls away. He looks for it*] Beastly shilling! [*He looks again*] Base ingratitude! Absolutely nothing. [*He laughs*] Mus' tell him I've got absolutely nothing.

[*He lurches through the door and down a corridor, and presently returns, followed by* JONES, *who is advanced in liquor.* JONES, *about thirty years of age, has hollow cheeks, black circles round his eyes, and rusty clothes. He looks as though he might be unemployed, and enters in a hang-dog manner*]

JACK. Sh! sh! sh! Don't you make a noise, whatever you do. Shu' the door, an' have a drink. [*Very solemnly*] You helped me to open the door — I've got nothin' for you. This is my house. My father's name's Barthwick; he's Member of Parliament — Liberal Member of Parliament: I've told you that before. Have a drink! [*He pours out whisky and drinks it up*] I'm not drunk — [*Subsiding on a sofa*] Tha's all right. Wha's your name? My name's Barthwick, so's my father's; *I'm* a Liberal too — wha're you?

JONES [*in a thick, sardonic voice*]. I'm a bloomin' Conser*vative*. My name's Jones! My wife works 'ere; she's the char; she works 'ere.

JACK. Jones? [*He laughs*] There's 'nother Jones at College with me. I'm not a Socialist myself; I'm a Liberal — there's ve-lill difference, because of the principles of the Lib—Liberal Party. We're all equal before the law — tha's rot, tha's silly. [*Laughs*] Wha' was I about to say? Give me some whisky.

[JONES *gives him the whisky he desires, together with a squirt of syphon*]

Wha' I was goin' tell you was — I've had a row with her. [*He waves the reticule*] Have a drink, Jones — sh'd never have got in without you — tha's why I'm giving you a drink. Don' care who knows I've scored her off. Th' cat! [*He throws his feet up on the sofa*] Don' you make a noise, whatever you do. You pour out a drink — you make yourself good long, long drink — you take cigarette — you take anything you like. Sh'd never have got in without you. [*Closing his eyes*] You're a Tory — you're a Tory Socialist. I'm Liberal

myself — have a drink — I'm an excel'nt chap.

[*His head drops back. He, smiling, falls asleep, and* JONES *stands looking at him; then, snatching up* JACK'S *glass, he drinks it off. He picks the reticule from off* JACK'S *shirt-front, holds it to the light, and smells at it*]

JONES. Been on the tiles and brought 'ome some of yer cat's fur.

[*He stuffs it into* JACK'S *breast pocket*]

JACK [*murmuring*]. I've scored you off! You cat!

[JONES *looks around him furtively; he pours out whisky and drinks it. From the silver box he takes a cigarette, puffs at it, and drinks more whisky. There is no sobriety left in him*]

JONES. Fat lot o' things they've got 'ere! [*He sees the crimson purse lying on the floor*] More cat's fur. Puss, puss! [*He fingers it, drops it on the tray, and looks at* JACK] Calf! Fat calf! [*He sees his own presentment in a mirror. Lifting his hands, with fingers spread, he stares at it; then looks again at* JACK, *clenching his fist as if to batter in his sleeping, smiling face. Suddenly he tilts the rest of the whisky into the glass and drinks it. With cunning glee he takes the silver box and purse and pockets them*] I'll score *you* off too, that's wot I'll do!

[*He gives a little snarling laugh and lurches to the door. His shoulder rubs against the switch; the light goes out. There is a sound as of a closing outer door*]

[*The curtain falls*]

[*The curtain rises again at once*]

SCENE SECOND. — *In the* BARTHWICKS' *dining-room.* JACK *is still asleep; the morning light is coming through the curtains. The time is half-past eight.* WHEELER, *brisk person, enters with a dust-pan, and* MRS. JONES *more slowly with a scuttle.*

WHEELER [*drawing the curtains*]. That precious husband of yours was round for you after you'd gone yesterday, Mrs. Jones. Wanted your money for drink, I suppose. He hangs about the corner here half the time. I saw him outside the "Goat and Bells" when I went to the post last night. If I were you I wouldn't live with him. I wouldn't live with a man that raised his hand to me. I wouldn't put up with it. Why don't you take your children and leave him? If you put up with 'im it'll only make him worse. I never can see why, because a man's married you, he should knock you about.

MRS. JONES. [*Slim, dark-eyed, and dark-haired; oval-faced, and with a smooth, soft, even voice; her manner patient, her way of talking quite impersonal; she wears a blue linen dress, and boots with holes*] It was nearly two last night before he come home, and he wasn't himself. He made me get up, and he knocked me about; he didn't seem to know *what* he was saying or doing. Of course I *would* leave him, but I'm really afraid of what he'd do to me. He's such a violent man when he's not himself.

WHEELER. Why don't you get him locked up? You'll never have any peace until you get him locked up. If I were you I'd go to the police court to-morrow. That's what I would do.

MRS. JONES. Of course I ought to go, because he does treat me so badly when he's not himself. But you see, Bettina, he has a very hard time — he's been out of work two months, and it preys upon his mind. When he's in work he behaves himself much better. It's when he's out of work that he's so violent.

WHEELER. Well, if you won't take any steps you'll never get rid of him.

MRS. JONES. Of course it's very wearing to me; I don't get my sleep at nights. And it's not as if I were getting help from him, because I have to do for the children and all of us. And he throws such dreadful things up at me, talks of my having men to follow me about. Such a thing never happens; no man ever speaks to me. And of course it's just the other way. It's what he does that's wrong and makes me so unhappy. And then he's always threatenin' to cut my throat if I leave him. It's all the drink, and things preying on his mind; he's not a bad man really. Sometimes he'll speak quite kind to me, but I've stood so much from him, I don't feel it in me to speak kind back, but just keep myself to myself. And he's all right with the

children too, except when he's not himself.

WHEELER. You mean when he's drunk, the beauty.

MRS. JONES. Yes. [*Without change of voice*] There's the young gentleman asleep on the sofa.

[*They both look silently at* JACK]

MRS. JONES [*at last, in her soft voice*]. He doesn't look quite himself.

WHEELER. He's a young limb, that's what he is. It's my belief he was tipsy last night, like your husband. It's another kind of bein' out of work that sets *him* to drink. I'll go and tell Marlow. This is his job. [*She goes*]

[MRS. JONES, *upon her knees, begins a gentle sweeping*]

JACK [*waking*]. Who's there? What is it?

MRS. JONES. It's me, sir, Mrs. Jones.

JACK [*sitting up and looking round*]. Where is it — what — what time is it?

MRS. JONES. It's getting on for nine o'clock, sir.

JACK. For nine! Why — what! [*Rising, and loosening his tongue; putting hand to his head, and staring hard at* MRS. JONES] Look here, you, Mrs. — Mrs. Jones — don't you say you caught me asleep here.

MRS. JONES. No, sir, of course I won't, sir.

JACK. It's quite an accident; I don't know how it happened. I must have forgotten to go to bed. It's a queer thing. I've got a most beastly headache. Mind you don't say anything, Mrs. Jones.

[*Goes out and passes* MARLOW *in the doorway.* MARLOW *is young and quiet; he is clean-shaven, and his hair is brushed high from his forehead in a coxcomb. Incidentally a butler, he is first a man. He looks at* MRS. JONES, *and smiles a private smile*]

MARLOW. Not the first time, and won't be the last. Looked a bit dicky, eh, Mrs. Jones?

MRS. JONES. He didn't look quite himself. Of course I didn't take notice.

MARLOW. You're used to them. How's your old man?

MRS. JONES [*softly as throughout*]. Well, he was very bad last night; he didn't seem to know what he was about. He was very late, and he was most abusive. But now, of course, he's asleep.

MARLOW. That's his way of finding a job, eh?

MRS. JONES. As a rule, Mr. Marlow, he goes out early every morning looking for work, and sometimes he comes in fit to drop — and of course I can't say he doesn't try to get it, because he does. Trade's very bad. [*She stands quite still, her pan and brush before her, at the beginning and the end of long vistas of experience, traversing them with her impersonal eye*] But he's not a good husband to me — last night he hit me, and he was so dreadfully abusive.

MARLOW. Bank 'oliday, eh! He's too fond of the "Goat and Bells," that's what's the matter with him. I see him at the corner late every night. He hangs about.

MRS. JONES. He gets to feeling very low walking about all day after work, and being refused so often, and then when he gets a drop in him it goes to his head. But he shouldn't treat his wife as he treats me. Sometimes I've had to go and walk about at night, when he wouldn't let me stay in the room; but he's sorry for it afterwards. And he hangs about after me, he waits for me in the street; and I don't think he ought to, because I've always been a good wife to him. And I tell him Mrs. Barthwick wouldn't like him coming about the place. But that only makes him angry, and he says dreadful things about the gentry. Of course it was through me that he first lost his place, through his not treating me right; and that's made him bitter against the gentry. He had a very good place as groom in the country; but it made such a stir, because of course he didn't treat me right.

MARLOW. Got the sack?

MRS. JONES. Yes; his employer said he couldn't keep him, because there was a great deal of talk; and he said it was such a bad example. But it's very important for me to keep my work here; I have the three children, and I don't want him to come about after me in the streets, and make a disturbance as he sometimes does.

MARLOW [*holding up the empty decanter*]. Not a drain! Next time he hits you get a witness and go down to the court ——

MRS. JONES. Yes, I think I've made up my mind. I think I ought to.

MARLOW. That's right. Where's the ciga——?

[*He searches for the silver box; he looks at* Mrs. Jones, *who is sweeping on her hands and knees; he checks himself and stands reflecting. From the tray he picks two half-smoked cigarettes, and reads the name on them*]

Nestor — where the deuce ——?

[*With a meditative air he looks again at* Mrs. Jones, *and, taking up* Jack's *overcoat, he searches in the pockets.* Wheeler, *with a tray of breakfast things, comes in*]

Marlow. [*Aside to* Wheeler] Have you seen the cigarette-box?

Wheeler. No.

Marlow. Well, it's gone. I put it on the tray last night. And he's been smoking. [*Showing her the ends of cigarettes*] It's not in these pockets. He can't have taken it upstairs this morning! Have a good look in his room when he comes down. Who's been in here?

Wheeler. Only me and Mrs. Jones.

Mrs. Jones. I've finished here; shall I do the drawing-room now?

Wheeler [*looking at her doubtfully*]. Have you seen — Better do the boudwower first.

[Mrs. Jones *goes out with pan and brush.* Marlow *and* Wheeler *look each other in the face*]

Marlow. It'll turn up.

Wheeler [*hesitatingly*]. You don't think *she* —— [*Nodding at the door*]

Marlow [*stoutly*]. I don't — I never believes anything of anybody.

Wheeler. But the master'll have to be told.

Marlow. You wait a bit, and see if it don't turn up. Suspicion's no business of ours. I set my mind against it.

[*The curtain falls*]

[*The curtain rises again at once*]

Scene Third. — Barthwick *and* Mrs. Barthwick *are seated at the breakfast table. He is a man between fifty and sixty; quietly important, with a bald forehead, and pince-nez, and the "Times" in his hand. She is a lady of nearly fifty, well dressed, with greyish hair, good features, and a decided manner. They face each other.*

Barthwick [*from behind his paper*]. The Labour man has got in at the by-election for Barnside, my dear.

Mrs. Barthwick. Another Labour? I can't think what on earth the country is about.

Barthwick. I predicted it. It's not a matter of vast importance.

Mrs. Barthwick. Not? How can you take it so calmly, John? To me it's simply outrageous. And there you sit, you Liberals, and pretend to encourage these people!

Barthwick [*frowning*]. The representation of all parties is necessary for any proper reform, for any proper social policy.

Mrs. Barthwick. I've no patience with your talk of reform — all that nonsense about social policy. We know perfectly well what it is they want; they want things for themselves. Those Socialists and Labour men are an absolutely selfish set of people. They have no sense of patriotism, like the upper classes; *they simply want what we've got.*

Barthwick. Want what we've got! [*He stares into space*] My dear, what are you talking about? [*With a contortion*] I'm no alarmist.

Mrs. Barthwick. Cream? Quite uneducated men! Wait until they begin to tax our investments. I'm convinced that when they once get a chance they will tax everything — they've no feeling for the country. You Liberals and Conservatives, you're all alike; you don't see an inch before your noses. You've no imagination, not a scrap of imagination between you. You ought to join hands and nip it in the bud.

Barthwick. You're talking nonsense! How is it possible for Liberals and Conservatives to join hands, as you call it? That shows how absurd it is for women — Why, the very essence of a Liberal is to trust in the people!

Mrs. Barthwick. Now, John, eat your breakfast. As if there were any real difference between you and the Conservatives. All the upper classes have the same interests to protect, and the same principles. [*Calmly*] Oh! you're sitting upon a volcano, John.

Barthwick. What!

MRS. BARTHWICK. I read a letter in the paper yesterday. I forget the man's name, but it made the whole thing perfectly clear. You don't look things in the face.

BARTHWICK. Indeed! [*Heavily*] I am a Liberal! Drop the subject, please!

MRS. BARTHWICK. Toast? I quite agree with what this man says: Education is simply ruining the lower classes. It unsettles them, and that's the worst thing for us all. I see an enormous difference in the manner of servants.

BARTHWICK [*with suspicious emphasis*]. I welcome any change that will lead to something better. [*He opens a letter*] H'm! This is that affair of Master Jack's again. "High Street, Oxford. Sir, We have received Mr. John Barthwick, Senior's, draft for forty pounds!" Oh! the letter's to him! "We now enclose the cheque you cashed with us, which, as we stated in our previous letter, was not met on presentation at your bank. We are, Sir, yours obediently, Moss and Sons, Tailors." H'm! [*Staring at the cheque*] A pretty business altogether! The boy might have been prosecuted.

MRS. BARTHWICK. Come, John, you know Jack didn't mean anything; he only thought he was overdrawing. I still think his bank ought to have cashed that cheque. They must know your position.

BARTHWICK [*replacing in the envelope the letter and the cheque*]. Much good that would have done him in a court of law.

[*He stops as* JACK *comes in, fastening his waistcoat and staunching a razor cut upon his chin*]

JACK [*sitting down between them, and speaking with an artificial joviality*]. Sorry I'm late. [*He looks lugubriously at the dishes*] Tea, please, mother. Any letters for me? [BARTHWICK *hands the letter to him*] But look here, I say, this has been opened! I do wish you wouldn't ——

BARTHWICK [*touching the envelope*]. I suppose I'm entitled to this name.

JACK [*sulkily*]. Well, I can't help having your name, father! [*He reads the letter, and mutters*] Brutes!

BARTHWICK [*eying him*]. You don't deserve to be so well out of that.

JACK. Haven't you ragged me enough, dad?

MRS. BARTHWICK. Yes, John, let Jack have his breakfast.

BARTHWICK. If you hadn't had me to come to, where would you have been? It's the merest accident — suppose you had been the son of a poor man or a clerk? Obtaining money with a cheque you knew your bank could not meet. It might have ruined you for life. I can't see what's to become of you if these are your principles. I never did anything of the sort myself.

JACK. I expect you always had lots of money. If you've got plenty of money, of course ——

BARTHWICK. On the contrary, I had not your advantages. My father kept me very short of money.

JACK. How much had you, dad?

BARTHWICK. It's not material. The question is, do you feel the gravity of what you did?

JACK. I don't know about the gravity. Of course, I'm very sorry if you think it was wrong. Haven't I said so! I should never have done it at all if I hadn't been so jolly hard up.

BARTHWICK. How much of that forty pounds have you got left, Jack?

JACK [*hesitating*]. I don't know — not much.

BARTHWICK. How much?

JACK [*desperately*]. I haven't got any.

BARTHWICK. What?

JACK. I know I've got the most beastly headache.

[*He leans his head on his hand*]

MRS. BARTHWICK. Headache? My dear boy! Can't you eat any breakfast?

JACK [*drawing in his breath*]. Too jolly bad!

MRS. BARTHWICK. I'm so sorry. Come with me, dear; I'll give you something that will take it away at once.

[*They leave the room; and* BARTHWICK, *tearing up the letter, goes to the fireplace and puts the pieces in the fire. While he is doing this* MARLOW *comes in, and looking round him, is about quietly to withdraw*]

BARTHWICK. What's that? What d' you want?

MARLOW. I was looking for Mr. John, sir.

BARTHWICK. What d' you want Mr. John for?

MARLOW [*with hesitation*]. I thought I should find him here, sir.

BARTHWICK [*suspiciously*]. Yes, but what do you want him for?

MARLOW [*offhandedly*]. There's a lady called — asked to speak to him for a minute, sir.

BARTHWICK. A lady, at this time in the morning. What sort of a lady?

MARLOW [*without expression in his voice*]. I can't tell, sir; no particular sort. She might be after charity. She might be a Sister of Mercy, I should think, sir.

BARTHWICK. Is she dressed like one?

MARLOW. No, sir, she's in plain clothes, sir.

BARTHWICK. Didn't she say what she wanted?

MARLOW. No, sir.

BARTHWICK. Where did you leave her?

MARLOW. In the hall, sir.

BARTHWICK. In the hall? How do you know she's not a thief — not got designs on the house?

MARLOW. No, sir, I don't fancy so, sir.

BARTHWICK. Well, show her in here; I'll see her myself.

[MARLOW *goes out with a private gesture of dismay. He soon returns, ushering in a young pale lady with dark eyes and pretty figure, in a modish, black, but rather shabby dress, a black and white trimmed hat with a bunch of Parma violets wrongly placed, and fuzzy-spotted veil. At the sight of* MR. BARTHWICK *she exhibits every sign of nervousness.* MARLOW *goes out*]

UNKNOWN LADY. Oh! but — I beg pardon — there's some mistake — I —— [*She turns to fly*]

BARTHWICK. Whom did you want to see, madam?

UNKNOWN [*stopping and looking back*]. It was Mr. *John* Barthwick I wanted to see.

BARTHWICK. I am John Barthwick, madam. What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?

UNKNOWN. Oh! I — I don't ——

[*She drops her eyes.* BARTHWICK *scrutinizes her, and purses his lips*]

BARTHWICK. It was my son, perhaps, you wished to see?

UNKNOWN [*quickly*]. Yes, of course, it's your son.

BARTHWICK. May I ask whom I have the pleasure of speaking to?

UNKNOWN [*appeal and hardiness upon her face*]. My name is — oh! it doesn't matter — I don't want to make any fuss. I just want to see your son for a minute. [*Boldly*] In fact, I *must* see him.

BARTHWICK [*controlling his uneasiness*]. My son is not very well. If necessary, no doubt I could attend to the matter; be so kind as to let me know ——

UNKNOWN. Oh! but I *must* see him — I've come on purpose — [*She bursts out nervously*] I don't want to make any fuss, but the fact is, last — last night your son took away — he took away my —— [*She stops*]

BARTHWICK [*severely*]. Yes, madam, what?

UNKNOWN. He took away my — my reticule.

BARTHWICK. Your reti——?

UNKNOWN. I don't care about the reticule; it's not *that* I want — I'm sure I don't want to make any fuss — [*her face is quivering*] — but — but — all my money was in it!

BARTHWICK. In what — in what?

UNKNOWN. In my purse, in the reticule. It was a crimson silk purse. Really, I wouldn't have come — I don't want to make any fuss. But I must get my money back — mustn't I?

BARTHWICK. Do you tell me that my son ——?

UNKNOWN. Oh! well, you see, he wasn't quite — I mean he was —— [*She smiles mesmerically*]

BARTHWICK. I beg your pardon.

UNKNOWN [*stamping her foot*]. Oh! don't you see — tipsy! We had a quarrel.

BARTHWICK [*scandalised*]. How? Where?

UNKNOWN [*defiantly*]. At my place. We'd had supper at the — and your son ——

BARTHWICK [*pressing the bell*]. May I ask how you knew this house? Did he give you his name and address?

UNKNOWN [*glancing sidelong*]. I got it out of his overcoat.

BARTHWICK [*sardonically*]. Oh! you got it out of his overcoat. And may I ask if my son will know you by daylight?

UNKNOWN. Know me? I should jolly — I mean, of course he will! [MARLOW *comes in*]

BARTHWICK. Ask Mr. John to come down.

[MARLOW *goes out, and* BARTHWICK *walks uneasily about*]

And how long have you enjoyed his acquaintanceship?

UNKNOWN. Only since — only since Good Friday.

BARTHWICK. I am at a loss — I repeat I am at a loss ——

[*He glances at this unknown lady, who stands with eyes cast down, twisting her hands. And suddenly* JACK *appears. He stops on seeing who is here, and the unknown lady hysterically giggles. There is a silence*]

BARTHWICK [*portentously*]. This young — er — lady says that last night — I think you said last night, madam, — you took away ——

UNKNOWN [*impulsively*]. My reticule, and all my money was in a crimson silk purse.

JACK. Reticule. [*Looking round for any chance to get away*] I don't know anything about it.

BARTHWICK [*sharply*]. Come, do you deny seeing this young lady last night?

JACK. Deny? No, of course. [*Whispering*] Why did you give me away like this? What on earth did you come here for?

UNKNOWN [*tearfully*]. I'm sure I didn't want to — it's not likely, is it? You snatched it out of my hand — you know you did — and the purse had all my money in it. I didn't follow you last night because I didn't want to make a fuss and it was so late, and you were so ——

BARTHWICK. Come, sir, don't turn your back on me — explain!

JACK [*desperately*]. I don't remember anything about it. [*In a low voice to his friend*] Why on earth couldn't you have written?

UNKNOWN [*sullenly*]. I want it now; I must have it — I've got to pay my rent to-day. [*She looks at* BARTHWICK] They're only too glad to jump on people who are not — not *well off*.

JACK. I don't remember anything about it, really. I don't remember anything about last night at all. [*He puts his hand up to his head*] It's all — cloudy, and I've got such a beastly headache.

UNKNOWN. But you *took* it; you know you did. You said you'd score me off.

JACK. Well, then, it must be here. I remember now — I remember something. Why did I take the beastly thing?

BARTHWICK. Yes, why did you take the beastly ——

[*He turns abruptly to the window*]

UNKNOWN [*with her mesmeric smile*]. You weren't quite — were you?

JACK [*smiling pallidly*]. I'm *awfully* sorry. If there's anything I can do ——

BARTHWICK. Do? You can restore this property, I suppose.

JACK. I'll go and have a look, but I really don't think I've got it.

[*He goes out hurriedly. And* BARTHWICK, *placing a chair, motions to the visitor to sit; then, with pursed lips, he stands and eyes her fixedly. She sits, and steals a look at him; then turns away, and, drawing up her veil, stealthily wipes her eyes. And* JACK *comes back*]

JACK [*ruefully holding out the empty reticule*]. Is that the thing? I've looked all over — I can't find the purse anywhere. Are you sure it was there?

UNKNOWN [*tearfully*]. Sure? Of course I'm sure. A crimson silk purse. It was all the money I had.

JACK. I really am awfully sorry — my head's so jolly bad. I've asked the butler, but he hasn't seen it.

UNKNOWN. I *must* have my money ——

JACK. Oh! Of course — that'll be all right; I'll see that that's all right. How much?

UNKNOWN [*sullenly*]. Seven pounds — twelve — it's all I've got in the world.

JACK. That'll be all right; I'll — send you a — cheque.

UNKNOWN [*eagerly*]. No; now, please. Give me what was in my purse; I've got to pay my rent this morning. They won't give me another day; I'm a fortnight behind already.

JACK [*blankly*]. I'm awfully sorry; I really haven't a penny in my pocket.

[*He glances stealthily at* BARTHWICK]

UNKNOWN [*excitedly*]. Come, I say you must — it's my money, and you took it. I'm not going away without it. They'll turn me out of my place.

JACK [*clasping his head*]. But I can't give you what I haven't got. Don't I tell you I haven't a beastly cent?

UNKNOWN [*tearing at her handkerchief*]. Oh! do give it me! [*She puts

her hands together in appeal; then, with sudden fierceness] If you don't I'll summons you. It's stealing, that's what it is!

BARTHWICK [*uneasily*]. One moment, please. As a matter of — er — principle, I shall settle this claim. [*He produces money*] Here is eight pounds; the extra will cover the value of the purse and your cab fares. I need make no comment — no thanks are necessary.

[*Touching the bell, he holds the door ajar in silence. The unknown lady stores the money in her reticule, she looks from* JACK *to* BARTHWICK, *and her face is quivering faintly with a smile. She hides it with her hand, and steals away. Behind her* BARTHWICK *shuts the door*]

BARTHWICK [*with solemnity*]. H'm! This is a nice thing to happen!

JACK [*impersonally*]. What awful luck!

BARTHWICK. So this is the way that forty pounds has gone! One thing after another! Once more I should like to know where you'd have been if it hadn't been for me! You don't seem to have any principles. You — you're one of those who are a nuisance to society; you — you're dangerous! What your mother would say I don't know. Your conduct, as far as I can see, is absolutely unjustifiable. It's — it's criminal. Why, a poor man who behaved as you've done . . . d'you think he'd have any mercy shown him? What you want is a good lesson. You and your sort are — [*he speaks with feeling*] — a nuisance to the community. Don't ask me to help you next time. You're not fit to be helped.

JACK [*turning upon his sire, with unexpected fierceness*]. All right, I won't then, and see how you like it. You wouldn't have helped me this time, I know, if you hadn't been scared the thing would get into the papers. Where are the cigarettes?

BARTHWICK [*regarding him uneasily*]. Well — I'll say no more about it. [*He rings the bell*] I'll pass it over for this once, but — [MARLOW *comes in*] You can clear away.

[*He hides his face behind the "Times"*]

JACK [*brightening*]. I say, Marlow, where are the cigarettes?

MARLOW. I put the box out with the whisky last night, sir, but this morning I can't find it anywhere.

JACK. Did you look in my room?

MARLOW. Yes, sir; I've looked all over the house. I found two Nestor ends in the tray this morning, so you must have been smokin' last night, sir. [*Hesitating*] I'm really afraid some one's purloined the box.

JACK [*uneasily*]. Stolen it!

BARTHWICK. What's that? The cigarette-box! Is anything else missing?

MARLOW. No, sir; I've been through the plate.

BARTHWICK. Was the house all right this morning? None of the windows open?

MARLOW. No, sir. [*Quietly to* JACK] You left your latch-key in the door last night, sir.

[*He hands it back, unseen by* BARTHWICK]

JACK. Tst!

BARTHWICK. Who's been in the room this morning?

MARLOW. Me and Wheeler, and Mrs. Jones is all, sir, as far as I know.

BARTHWICK. Have you asked Mrs. Barthwick? [*To* JACK] Go and ask your mother if she's had it; ask her to look and see if she's missed anything else. [JACK *goes upon this mission*] Nothing is more disquieting than losing things like this.

MARLOW. No, sir.

BARTHWICK. Have you any suspicions?

MARLOW. No, sir.

BARTHWICK. This Mrs. Jones — how long has she been working here?

MARLOW. Only this last month, sir.

BARTHWICK. What sort of person?

MARLOW. I don't know much about her, sir; seems a very quiet, respectable woman.

BARTHWICK. Who did the room this morning?

MARLOW. Wheeler and Mrs. Jones, sir.

BARTHWICK [*with his forefinger upraised*]. Now, was this Mrs. Jones in the room alone at any time?

MARLOW [*expressionless*]. Yes, sir.

BARTHWICK. How do you know that?

MARLOW [*reluctantly*]. I found her here, sir.

BARTHWICK. And has Wheeler been in the room alone?

MARLOW. No, sir, she's not, sir.

I should say, sir, that Mrs. Jones seems a very honest ——

BARTHWICK [*holding up his hand*]. I want to know this: Has this Mrs. Jones been here the whole morning?

MARLOW. Yes, sir — no, sir — she stepped over to the greengrocer's for cook.

BARTHWICK. H'm! Is she in the house now?

MARLOW. Yes, sir.

BARTHWICK. Very good. I shall make a point of clearing this up. On principle I shall make a point of fixing the responsibility; it goes to the foundations of security. In all your interests ——

MARLOW. Yes, sir.

BARTHWICK. What sort of circumstances is this Mrs. Jones in? Is her husband in work?

MARLOW. I believe not, sir.

BARTHWICK. Very well. Say nothing about it to any one. Tell Wheeler not to speak of it, and ask Mrs. Jones to step up here.

MARLOW. Very good, sir.

[MARLOW *goes out, his face concerned; and* BARTHWICK *stays, his face judicial and a little pleased, as befits a man conducting an inquiry.* MRS. BARTHWICK *and her son come in*]

BARTHWICK. Well, my dear, you've not seen it, I suppose?

MRS. BARTHWICK. No. But what an extraordinary thing, John! Marlow, of course, is out of the question. I'm certain none of the maids — as for cook!

BARTHWICK. Oh, cook!

MRS. BARTHWICK. Of course! It's perfectly detestable to me to suspect anybody.

BARTHWICK. It is not a question of one's feelings. It's a question of justice. On principle ——

MRS. BARTHWICK. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if the charwoman knew something about it. It was Laura who recommended her.

BARTHWICK [*judicially*]. I am going to have Mrs. Jones up. Leave it to me; and — er — remember that nobody is guilty until they're proved so. I shall be careful. I have no intention of frightening her; I shall give her every chance. I hear she's in poor circumstances. If we are not able to do much for them we are bound to have the greatest sympathy with the poor. [MRS. JONES *comes in*] [*Pleasantly*] Oh! good morning, Mrs. Jones.

MRS. JONES [*soft, and even, unemphatic*]. Good morning, sir! Good morning, ma'am!

BARTHWICK. About your husband — he's not in work, I hear?

MRS. JONES. No, sir; of course he's not in work just now.

BARTHWICK. Then I suppose he's earning nothing.

MRS. JONES. No, sir, he's not earning anything just now, sir.

BARTHWICK. And how many children have you?

MRS. JONES. Three children; but of course they don't eat very much, sir.

[*A little silence*]

BARTHWICK. And how old is the eldest?

MRS. JONES. Nine years old, sir.

BARTHWICK. Do they go to school?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir, they all three go to school every day.

BARTHWICK [*severely*]. And what about their food when you're out at work?

MRS. JONES. Well, sir, I have to give them their dinner to take with them. Of course I'm not always able to give them anything; sometimes I have to send them without; but my husband is very good about the children when he's in work. But when he's not in work of course he's a very difficult man.

BARTHWICK. He drinks, I suppose?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir. Of course I can't say he doesn't drink, because he does.

BARTHWICK. And I suppose he takes all your money?

MRS. JONES. No, sir, he's very good about my money, except when he's not himself, and then, of course, he treats me very badly.

BARTHWICK. Now what is he — your husband?

MRS. JONES. By profession, sir, of course he's a groom.

BARTHWICK. A groom! How came he to lose his place?

MRS. JONES. He lost his place a long time ago, sir, and he's never had a very long job since; and now, of course, the motor-cars are against him.

BARTHWICK. When were you married to him, Mrs. Jones?

MRS. JONES. Eight years ago, sir — that was in ——

MRS. BARTHWICK [*sharply*]. Eight? You said the eldest child was nine.

MRS. JONES. Yes, ma'am; of course that was why he lost his place. He didn't treat me rightly, and of course his employer said he couldn't keep him because of the example.

BARTHWICK. You mean he — ahem ——

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir; and of course after he lost his place he married me.

MRS. BARTHWICK. You actually mean to say you — you were ——

BARTHWICK. My dear ——

MRS. BARTHWICK [*indignantly*]. How disgraceful!

BARTHWICK [*hurriedly*]. And where are you living now, Mrs. Jones?

MRS. JONES. We've not got a home, sir. Of course we've been obliged to put away most of our things.

BARTHWICK. Put your things away! You mean to — to — er — to pawn them?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir, to put them away. We're living in Merthyr Street — that is close by here, sir — at No. 34. We just have the one room.

BARTHWICK. And what do you pay a week?

MRS. JONES. We pay six shillings a week, sir, for a furnished room.

BARTHWICK. And I suppose you're behind in the rent?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir, we're a little behind in the rent.

BARTHWICK. But *you're* in good work, aren't you?

MRS. JONES. Well, sir, I have a day in Stamford Place Thursdays. And Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays I come here. But to-day, of course, is a half-day, because of yesterday's Bank Holiday.

BARTHWICK. I see; four days a week, and you get half a crown a day, is that it?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir, and my dinner; but sometimes it's only half a day, and that's eighteenpence.

BARTHWICK. And when your husband earns anything he spends it in drink, I suppose?

MRS. JONES. Sometimes he does, sir, and sometimes he gives it to me for the children. Of course he would work if he could get it, sir, but it seems there are a great many people out of work.

BARTHWICK. Ah! Yes. We — er — won't go into that. [*Sympathetically*] And how about your work here? Do you find it hard?

MRS. JONES. Oh! no, sir, not very hard, sir; except of course, when I don't get my sleep at night.

BARTHWICK. Ah! And you help do all the rooms? And sometimes, I suppose, you go out for cook?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir.

BARTHWICK. And you've been out this morning?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir, of course I had to go to the greengrocer's.

BARTHWICK. Exactly. So your husband earns nothing? And he's a bad character.

MRS. JONES. No, sir, I don't say that, sir. I think there's a great deal of good in him; though he does treat me very bad sometimes. And of course I don't like to leave him, but I think I ought to, because really I hardly know how to stay with him. He often raises his hand to me. Not long ago he gave me a blow here [*touches her breast*] and I can feel it now. So I think I ought to leave him, don't *you*, sir?

BARTHWICK. Ah! I can't help you there. It's a very serious thing to leave your husband. Very serious thing.

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir, of course I'm afraid of what he might do to me if I were to leave him; he can be so very violent.

BARTHWICK. H'm! Well, that I can't pretend to say anything about. It's the bad principle I'm speaking of ——

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir; I know nobody can help me. I know I must decide for myself, and of course I know that he has a very hard life. And he's fond of the children, and it's very hard for him to see them going without food.

BARTHWICK [*hastily*]. Well — er — thank you, I just wanted to hear about you. I don't think I need detain you any longer, Mrs. — Jones.

MRS. JONES. No, sir, thank you, sir.

BARTHWICK. Good morning, then.

MRS. JONES. Good morning, sir; good morning, ma'am.

BARTHWICK [*exchanging glances with his wife*]. By the way, Mrs. Jones — I think it is only fair to tell you. a silver cigarette-box — er — is missing.

MRS. JONES [*looking from one face to the other*]. I am very sorry, sir.

BARTHWICK. Yes; you have not seen it, I suppose?

MRS. JONES [*realising that suspicion is upon her; with an uneasy movement*] Where was it, sir; if you please, sir?

BARTHWICK [*evasively*]. Where did Marlow say? Er — in this room, yes, in *this* room.

MRS. JONES. No, sir, I haven't seen it — of course if I'd seen it I should have noticed it.

BARTHWICK [*giving her a rapid glance*]. You — you are sure of that?

MRS. JONES [*impassively*]. Yes, sir. [*With a slow nodding of her head*] I have not seen it, and of course I *don't* know where it is.

[*She turns and goes quietly out*]

BARTHWICK. H'm!

[*The three* BARTHWICKS *avoid each other's glances*]

[*The curtain falls*]

ACT II

SCENE FIRST. — *The* JONES'S *lodgings, Merthyr Street, at half-past two o'clock.*

[*The bare room, with tattered oilcloth and damp, distempered walls, has an air of tidy wretchedness. On the bed lies* JONES, *half-dressed; his coat is thrown across his feet, and muddy boots are lying on the floor close by. He is asleep. The door is opened and* MRS. JONES *comes in, dressed in a pinched black jacket and old black sailor hat; she carries a parcel wrapped up in the "Times." She puts her parcel down, unwraps an apron, half a loaf, two onions, three potatoes, and a tiny piece of bacon. Taking a teapot from the cupboard, she rinses it, shakes into it some powdered tea out of a screw of paper, puts it on the hearth, and sitting in a wooden chair quietly begins to cry*]

JONES [*stirring and yawning*]. That you? What's the time?

MRS. JONES [*drying her eyes, and in her usual voice*]. Half-past two.

JONES. What you back so soon for?

MRS. JONES. I only had the half day to-day, Jem.

JONES [*on his back, and in a drowsy voice*]. Got anything for dinner?

MRS. JONES. Mrs. Barthwick's cook gave me a little bit of bacon. I'm going to make a stew. [*She prepares for cooking*] There's fourteen shillings owing for rent, James, and of course I've only got two and fourpence. They'll be coming for it to-day.

JONES [*turning towards her on his elbow*]. Let 'em come and find my surprise packet. I've had enough o' this tryin' for work. Why should I go round and round after a job like a bloomin' squirrel in a cage. "Give us a job, sir" — "Take a man on" — "Got a wife and three children." Sick of it I am! I'd sooner lie here and rot. "Jones, you come and join the demonstration; come and 'old a flag, and listen to the ruddy orators, and go 'ome as empty as you came." There's some that seems to like *that* — the sheep! When I go seekin' for a job now, and see the brutes lookin' me up an' down, it's like a thousand serpents in me. I'm not arskin' for any treat. A man wants to sweat hisself silly and not allowed — that's a rum start, ain't it? A man wants to sweat his soul out to keep the breath in him and ain't allowed — that's justice — that's freedom and all the rest of it! [*He turns his face towards the wall*] You're so milky mild; you don't know what goes on inside o' me. I'm done with the silly game. If they want me, let 'em come for me! [MRS. JONES *stops cooking and stands unmoving at the table*] I've tried and done with it, I tell you. I've never been afraid of what's before *me*. You mark my words — if you think they've broke my spirit, you're mistook. I'll lie and rot sooner than arsk 'em again. What makes you stand like that — you long-sufferin', Gawd-forsaken image — that's why I can't keep my hands off you. So now you know. Work! You can work but you haven't the spirit of a louse!

MRS. JONES [*quietly*]. You talk more wild sometimes when you're yourself, James, than when you're not. If you don't get work, how are we to go on? They won't let us stay here; they're looking to their money to-day, I know.

JONES. I see this Barthwick o' yours every day goin' down to Pawlyment snug and comfortable to talk his silly soul out; an' I see that young calf, his son, swellin' it about, and goin' on the razzle-dazzle. Wot 'ave they done that makes 'em any better than wot I am? They never did a day's work in their lives. I see 'em day after day ——

MRS. JONES. And I wish you wouldn't come after me like that, and hang about the house. You don't

seem able to keep away at all, and whatever you do it for I can't think, because of course they notice it.

JONES. I suppose I may go where I like. Where *may* I go? The other day I went to a place in the Edgware Road. "Gov'nor," I says to the boss, "take me on," I says. "I 'aven't done a stroke o' work not these two months; it takes the heart out of a man," I says; "I'm one to work; I'm not afraid of anything you can give me!" "My good man," 'e says, "I've had thirty of you here this morning. I took the first two," he says, "and that's all I want." "Thank you, then rot the world!" I says. "Blasphemin'," he says, "is not the way to get a job. Out you go, my lad!" [*He laughs sardonically*] Don't you raise your voice because you're starvin'; don't yer even think of it; take it lyin' down! Take it like a sensible man, carn't you? And a little way down the street a lady says to me: [*Pinching his voice*] "D' you want to earn a few pence, my man?" and gives me her dog to 'old outside a shop — fat as a butler 'e was — tons o' meat had gone to the makin' of *him*. It did 'er good, it did, made 'er feel 'erself that *charitable*, but I see 'er lookin' at the copper standin' alongside o' me, for fear I should make off with 'er bloomin' fat dog. [*He sits on the edge of the bed and puts a boot on. Then looking up*] What's in that head o' yours? [*Almost pathetically*] Carn't you speak for once?

[*There is a knock, and* MRS. SEDDON, *the landlady, appears, an anxious, harassed, shabby woman in working clothes*]

MRS. SEDDON. I thought I 'eard you come in, Mrs. Jones. I've spoke to my 'usband, but he says he really can't afford to wait another day.

JONES [*with scowling jocularity*]. Never you mind what your 'usband says, you go your own way like a proper independent woman. Here, Jenny, chuck her that.

[*Producing a sovereign from his trousers pocket, he throws it to his wife, who catches it in her apron with a gasp.* JONES *resumes the lacing of his boots*]

MRS. JONES [*rubbing the sovereign stealthily*]. I'm very sorry we're so late with it, and of course it's fourteen shillings, so if you've got six that will be right.

[MRS. SEDDON *takes the sovereign and fumbles for the change*]

JONES [*with his eyes fixed on his boots*]. Bit of a surprise for yer, ain't it?

MRS. SEDDON. Thank you, and I'm sure I'm very much obliged. [*She does indeed appear surprised*] I'll bring you the change.

JONES [*mockingly*]. Don't mention it.

MRS. SEDDON. Thank you, and I'm sure I'm very much obliged.

[*She slides away*]

[MRS. JONES *gazes at* JONES *who is still lacing up his boots*]

JONES. I've had a bit of luck. [*Pulling out the crimson purse and some loose coins*] Picked up a purse — seven pound and more.

MRS. JONES. Oh, James!

JONES. Oh, James! What about Oh, James! I picked it up I tell you. This is lost property, this is!

MRS. JONES. But isn't there a name in it, or something?

JONES. Name? No, there ain't no name. This don't belong to such as 'ave visitin' cards. This belongs to a perfec' lidy. Tike an' smell it. [*He pitches her the purse, which she puts gently to her nose*] Now, you tell me what I ought to have done. You tell me that. You can always tell me what I ought to ha' done, can't yer?

MRS. JONES [*laying down the purse*]. I can't say what you ought to have done, James. Of course the money wasn't yours; you've taken somebody else's money.

JONES. Finding's keeping. I'll take it as wages for the time I've gone about the streets asking for what's my rights. I'll take it for what's *overdue*, d'ye hear? [*With strange triumph*] I've got money in my pocket, my girl. [MRS. JONES *goes on again with the preparation of the meal,* JONES *looking at her furtively*] Money in my pocket! And I'm not goin' to waste it. With this 'ere money I'm goin' to Canada. I'll let you have a pound. [*A silence*] You've often talked of leavin' me. You've often told me I treat you badly — well I 'ope you'll be glad when I'm gone.

MRS. JONES [*impassively*]. You *have* treated me very badly, James, and of course I can't prevent your going; but I can't tell whether I shall be glad when you're gone.

JONES. It'll change my luck. I've 'ad nothing but bad luck since I first

took up with you. [*More softly*] And you've 'ad no bloomin' picnic.

MRS. JONES. Of course it would have been better for us if we had never met. We weren't meant for each other. But you're set against me, that's what you are, and you *have* been for a long time. And you treat me so badly, James, going after that Rosie and all. You don't ever seem to think of the children that I've had to bring into the world, and of all the trouble I've had to keep them, and what'll become of them when you're gone.

JONES [*crossing the room gloomily*]. If you think I want to leave the little beggars you're bloomin' well mistaken.

MRS. JONES. Of course I know you're fond of them.

JONES [*fingering the purse, half angrily*]. Well, then, you stow it, old girl. The kids'll get along better with you than when I'm here. If I'd ha' known as much as I do now, I'd never ha' had one o' them. What's the use o' bringin' 'em into a state o' things like this? It's a crime, that's what it is; but you find it out too late; that's what's the matter with this 'ere world.

[*He puts the purse back in his pocket*]

MRS. JONES. Of course it would have been better for them, poor little things; but they're your own children, and I wonder at you talkin' like that. I should miss them dreadfully if I was to lose them.

JONES [*sullenly*]. An' you ain't the only one. If I make money out there — [*Looking up, he sees her shaking out his coat — in a changed voice*] Leave that coat alone!

[*The silver box drops from the pocket, scattering the cigarettes upon the bed. Taking up the box she stares at it; he rushes at her and snatches the box away*]

MRS. JONES [*cowering back against the bed*]. Oh, Jem! oh, Jem!

JONES [*dropping the box on to the table*]. You mind what you're sayin'! When I go out I'll take and chuck it in the water along with that there purse. I 'ad it when I was in liquor, and for what you do when you're in liquor you're not responsible — and that's Gawd's truth as you ought to know. I don't want the thing — I won't have it. I took it out o' spite. I'm no thief, I tell you; and don't you call me one, or it'll be the worse for you.

MRS. JONES [*twisting her apron strings*]. It's Mr. Barthwick's! You've taken away my reputation. Oh, Jem, whatever made you?

JONES. What d' you mean?

MRS. JONES. It's been missed; they think it's me. Oh! whatever made you do it, Jem?

JONES. I tell you I was in liquor. I don't want it; what's the good of it to me? If I were to pawn it they'd only nab me. I'm no thief. I'm no worse than wot that young Barthwick is; he brought 'ome that purse that I picked up — a lady's purse — 'ad it off 'er in a row, kept sayin' 'e 'd scored 'er off. Well, I scored 'im off. Tight as an owl 'e was! And d' you think anything 'll happen to him?

MRS. JONES [*as though speaking to herself*]. Oh, Jem! it's the bread out of our mouths!

JONES. Is it then? I'll make it hot for 'em yet. What about that purse? What about young Barthwick? [MRS. JONES *comes forward to the table and tries to take the box;* JONES *prevents her*] What do you want with that? You drop it, I say!

MRS. JONES. I'll take it back and tell them all about it.

[*She attempts to wrest the box from him*]

JONES. Ah, would yer?

[*He drops the box, and rushes on her with a snarl. She slips back past the bed. He follows; a chair is overturned. The door is opened;* SNOW *comes in, a detective in plain clothes and bowler hat, with clipped moustaches.* JONES *drops his arms,* MRS. JONES *stands by the window gasping;* SNOW, *advancing swiftly to the table, puts his hand on the silver box*]

SNOW. Doin' a bit o' skylarkin'? Fancy this is what I'm after. J. B., the very same. [*He gets back to the door, scrutinizing the crest and cypher on the box. To* MRS. JONES] I'm a police officer. Are you Mrs. Jones?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir.

SNOW. My instructions are to take you on a charge of stealing this box from J. Barthwick, Esquire, M. P., of 6, Rockingham Gate. Anything you say may be used against you. Well, Missis?

MRS. JONES [*in her quiet voice, still out of breath, her hand upon her breast*]. Of course I did *not* take it, sir. I never have

taken anything that didn't belong to me; and of course I know nothing about it.

SNOW. You were at the house this morning; you did the room in which the box was left; you were alone in the room. I find the box 'ere. You say you didn't take it?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir, of course I say I did not take it, because I did *not*.

SNOW. Then how does the box come to be here?

MRS. JONES. I would rather not say anything about it.

SNOW. Is this your husband?

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir, this is my husband, sir.

SNOW. Do you wish to say anything before I take her? [JONES *remains silent, with his head bent down*] Well then, Missis. I'll just trouble you to come along with me quietly.

MRS. JONES [*twisting her hands*]. Of course I wouldn't say I hadn't taken it if I had — and I *didn't* take it, indeed I didn't. Of course I know appearances are against me, and I can't tell you what really happened. But my children are at school, and they'll be coming home — and I don't know what they'll do without me!

SNOW. Your 'usband 'll see to them, don't you worry.

[*He takes the woman gently by the arm*]

JONES. You drop it — she's all right! [*Sullenly*] I took the thing myself.

SNOW [*eying him*]. There, there, it does you credit. Come along, Missis.

JONES [*passionately*]. Drop it, I say, you blooming teck. She's my wife; she's a respectable woman. Take her if you dare!

SNOW. Now, now. What's the good of this? Keep a civil tongue, and it'll be the better for all of us.

[*He puts his whistle in his mouth and draws the woman to the door*]

JONES [*with a rush*]. Drop her, and put up your 'ands, or I'll soon make yer. You leave her alone, will yer! Don't I tell yer, I took the thing myself!

SNOW [*blowing his whistle*]. Drop your hands, or I'll take you too. Ah, would you?

[JONES, *closing, deals him a blow. A* POLICEMAN *in uniform appears; there is a short struggle and* JONES *is overpowered*. MRS. JONES *raises her hands and drops her face on them*]

[*The curtain falls*]

SCENE SECOND. — *The* BARTHWICKS' *dining-room the same evening. The* BARTHWICKS *are seated at dessert.*

MRS. BARTHWICK. John! [*A silence broken by the cracking of nuts*] John!

BARTHWICK. I wish you'd speak about the nuts — they're uneatable.

[*He puts one in his mouth*]

MRS. BARTHWICK. It's not the season for them. I called on the Holyroods.

[BARTHWICK *fills his glass with port*]

JACK. Crackers, please, Dad.

[BARTHWICK *passes the crackers. His demeanour is reflective*]

MRS. BARTHWICK. Lady Holyrood has got very stout. I've noticed it coming for a long time.

BARTHWICK [*gloomily*]. Stout? [*He takes up the crackers — with transparent airiness*] The Holyroods had some trouble with their servants, hadn't they?

JACK. Crackers, please, Dad.

BARTHWICK [*passing the crackers*]. It got into the papers. The cook, wasn't it?

MRS. BARTHWICK. No, the lady's maid. I was talking it over with Lady Holyrood. The girl used to have her young man to see her.

BARTHWICK [*uneasily*]. I'm not sure they were wise ——

MRS. BARTHWICK. My dear John, what are you talking about? How could there be any alternative? Think of the effect on the other servants!

BARTHWICK. Of course in principle — I wasn't thinking of that.

JACK [*maliciously*]. Crackers, please, Dad.

[BARTHWICK *is compelled to pass the crackers*]

MRS. BARTHWICK. Lady Holyrood told me: "I had her up," she said; "I said to her, 'You'll leave my house at once; I think your conduct disgraceful. I can't tell, I don't know, and I don't wish to know, what you were doing. I send you away on principle; you need not come to me for a character.' And the girl said: 'If you don't give me my notice, my lady, I want a month's wages. I'm perfectly respectable. I've done nothing.'" — Done nothing!

BARTHWICK. H'm!

MRS. BARTHWICK. Servants have too much license. They hang together so terribly you never can tell what

they're really thinking; it's as if they were all in a conspiracy to keep you in the dark. Even with Marlow, you feel that he never lets you know what's really in his mind. I hate that secretiveness; it destroys all confidence. I feel sometimes I should like to shake him.

JACK. Marlow's a most decent chap. It's simply beastly every one knowing your affairs.

BARTHWICK. The less you say about that the better!

MRS. BARTHWICK. It goes all through the lower classes. You can *not* tell when they are speaking the truth. To-day when I was shopping after leaving the Holyroods, one of these unemployed came up and spoke to me. I suppose I only had twenty yards or so to walk to the carriage, but he seemed to spring up in the street.

BARTHWICK. Ah! You must be very careful whom you speak to in these days.

MRS. BARTHWICK. I didn't answer him, of course. But I could see at once that he wasn't telling the truth.

BARTHWICK [*cracking a nut*]. There's one very good rule — look at their eyes.

JACK. Crackers, please, Dad.

BARTHWICK [*passing the crackers*]. If their eyes are straightforward I sometimes give them sixpence. It's against my principles, but it's most difficult to refuse. If you see that they're desperate, and dull, and shifty-looking, as so many of them are, it's certain to mean drink, or crime, or something unsatisfactory.

MRS. BARTHWICK. This man had dreadful eyes. He looked as if he could commit a murder. "I've 'ad nothing to eat to-day," he said. Just like that.

BARTHWICK. What was William about? He ought to have been waiting.

JACK [*raising his wine-glass to his nose*]. Is this the '63, Dad?

[BARTHWICK, *holding his wine-glass to his eye, lowers it and passes it before his nose*]

MRS. BARTHWICK. I hate people that can't speak the truth. [*Father and son exchange a look behind their port*] It's just as easy to speak the truth as not. *I've* always found it easy enough. It makes it impossible to tell what is genuine; one feels as if one were continually being taken in.

BARTHWICK [*sententiously*]. The lower classes are their own enemies. If they would only trust us, they would get on so much better.

MRS. BARTHWICK. But even then it's so often their own fault. Look at that Mrs. Jones this morning.

BARTHWICK. I only want to do what's right in that matter. I had occasion to see Roper this afternoon. I mentioned it to him. He's coming in this evening. It all depends on what the detective says. I've had my doubts. I've been thinking it over.

MRS. BARTHWICK. The woman impressed me most unfavourably. She seemed to have no shame. That affair she was talking about — she and the man when they were young, so immoral! And before you and Jack! I could have put her out of the room!

BARTHWICK. Oh! I don't want to excuse them, but in looking at these matters one must consider ——

MRS. BARTHWICK. Perhaps you'll say the man's employer was wrong in dismissing him?

BARTHWICK. Of course not. It's not there that I feel doubt. What I ask myself is ——

JACK. Port, please, Dad.

BARTHWICK [*circulating the decanter in religious imitation of the rising and setting of the sun*]. I ask myself whether we are sufficiently careful in making inquiries about people before we engage them, especially as regards moral conduct.

JACK. Pass the port, please, Mother!

MRS. BARTHWICK [*passing it*]. My dear boy, aren't you drinking too much?

[JACK *fills his glass*]

MARLOW [*entering*]. Detective Snow to see you, sir.

BARTHWICK [*uneasily*]. Ah! say I'll be with him in a minute.

MRS. BARTHWICK [*without turning*]. Let him come in here, Marlow.

[SNOW *enters in an overcoat, his bowler hat in hand*]

BARTHWICK [*half-rising*]. Oh! Good evening!

SNOW. Good evening, sir; good evening, ma'am. I've called round to report what I've done, rather late, I'm afraid — another case took me away. [*He takes the silver box out of his pocket, causing a sensation in the* BARTHWICK *family*] This is the identical article, I believe.

BARTHWICK. Certainly, certainly.

SNOW. Havin' your crest and cypher, as you described to me, sir, I'd no hesitation in the matter.

BARTHWICK. Excellent. Will you have a glass of [*He glances at the waning port*] — er — sherry — [*pours out sherry*]. Jack, just give Mr. Snow this.

[JACK *rises and gives the glass to* SNOW; *then, lolling in his chair, regards him indolently*]

SNOW [*drinking off wine and putting down the glass*]. After seeing you I went round to this woman's lodgings, sir. It's a low neighbourhood, and I thought it as well to place a constable below — and not without 'e was wanted, as things turned out.

BARTHWICK. Indeed!

SNOW. Yes, sir, I 'ad some trouble. I asked her to account for the presence of the article. She could give me no answer, except to deny the theft; so I took her into custody; then her husband came for me, so I was obliged to take him, too, for assault. He was very violent on the way to the station — very violent — threatened you and your son, and altogether he was a handful, I can tell you.

MRS. BARTHWICK. What a ruffian he must be!

SNOW. Yes, ma'am, a rough customer.

JACK [*sipping his wine, bemused*]. Punch the beggar's head.

SNOW. Given to drink, as I understand, sir.

MRS. BARTHWICK. It's to be hoped he will get a severe punishment.

SNOW. The odd thing is, sir, that he persists in sayin' he took the box himself.

BARTHWICK. Took the box himself! [*He smiles*] What does he think to gain by that?

SNOW. He says the young gentleman was intoxicated last night — [JACK *stops the cracking of a nut, and looks at* SNOW. BARTHWICK, *losing his smile, has put his wine-glass down; there is a silence* — SNOW, *looking from face to face, remarks*] — took him into the house and gave him whisky; and under the influence of an empty stomach the man says he took the box.

MRS. BARTHWICK. The impudent wretch!

BARTHWICK. D' you mean that he — er — intends to put this forward to-morrow ——

SNOW. That'll be his line, sir; but whether he's endeavouring to shield his wife, or whether [*he looks at* JACK] there's something in it, will be for the magistrate to say.

MRS. BARTHWICK [*haughtily*]. Something in what? I don't understand you. As if my son would bring a man like that into the house!

BARTHWICK [*from the fireplace, with an effort to be calm*]. My son can speak for himself, no doubt. — Well, Jack, what do you say?

MRS. BARTHWICK [*sharply*]. What does he say? Why, of course, he says the whole story's stuff!

JACK [*embarrassed*]. Well, of course, I — of course, I don't know anything about it.

MRS. BARTHWICK. I should think not, indeed! [*To* SNOW] The man is an audacious ruffian!

BARTHWICK [*suppressing jumps*]. But in view of my son's saying there's nothing in this — this fable — will it be necessary to proceed against the man under the circumstances?

SNOW. We shall have to charge him with the assault, sir. It would be as well for your son to come down to the Court. There'll be a remand, no doubt. The queer thing is there was quite a sum of money found on him, and a crimson silk purse. [BARTHWICK *starts;* JACK *rises and sits down again*] I suppose the lady hasn't missed her purse?

BARTHWICK [*hastily*]. Oh, no! Oh! No!

JACK. No!

MRS. BARTHWICK [*dreamily*]. No! [*To* SNOW] I've been inquiring of the servants. This man *does* hang about the house. I shall feel much safer if he gets a good long sentence; I do think we ought to be protected against such ruffians.

BARTHWICK. Yes, yes, of course, on principle — but in this case we have a number of things to think of. [*To* SNOW] I suppose, as you say, the man *must* be charged, eh?

SNOW. No question about that, sir.

BARTHWICK [*staring gloomily at* JACK]. This prosecution goes very much against the grain with me. I have great sympathy with the poor. In my position I'm bound to recognise the distress there is amongst them. The condition of the people leaves much to be desired. D' you follow me? I wish I could see my way to drop it.

MRS. BARTHWICK [*sharply*]. John! it's simply not fair to other people. It's putting property at the mercy of any one who likes to take it.

BARTHWICK [*trying to make signs to her aside*]. I'm not defending him, not at all. I'm trying to look at the matter broadly.

MRS. BARTHWICK. Nonsense, John, there's a time for everything.

SNOW [*rather sardonically*]. I might point out, sir, that to withdraw the charge of stealing would not make much difference, because the facts must come out [*he looks significantly at* JACK] in reference to the assault; and as I said that charge will have to go forward.

BARTHWICK [*hastily*]. Yes, oh! exactly! It's entirely on the woman's account — entirely a matter of my own private feelings.

SNOW. If I were you, sir, I should let things take their course. It's not likely there'll be much difficulty. These things are very quick settled.

BARTHWICK [*doubtfully*]. You think so — you think so?

JACK [*rousing himself*]. I say, what shall I have to swear to?

SNOW. That's best known to yourself, sir. [*Retreating to the door*] Better employ a solicitor, sir, in case anything should arise. We shall have the butler to prove the loss of the article. You'll excuse me going, I'm rather pressed to-night. The case may come on any time after eleven. Good evening, sir; good evening, ma'am. I shall have to produce the box in court to-morrow, so if you'll excuse me, sir, I may as well take it with me.

[*He takes the silver box and leaves them with a little bow*]

[BARTHWICK *makes a move to follow him, then dashing his hands beneath his coat tails, speaks with desperation*]

BARTHWICK. I do wish you'd leave me to manage things myself. You *will* put your nose into matters you know nothing of. A pretty mess you've made of this!

MRS. BARTHWICK [*coldly*]. I don't in the least know what you're talking about. If you can't stand up for your rights, I can. I've no patience with your principles, it's such nonsense.

BARTHWICK. Principles! Good Heavens! What have principles to do with it for goodness sake? Don't you know that Jack was drunk last night!

JACK. Dad!

MRS. BARTHWICK [*in horror, rising*]. Jack!

JACK. Look here, Mother — I had supper. Everybody does. I mean to say — you know what I mean — it's absurd to call it being drunk. At Oxford everybody gets a bit "on" sometimes ——

MRS. BARTHWICK. Well, I think it's most dreadful! If that is really what you do at Oxford ——

JACK [*angrily*]. Well, why did you send me there? One must do as other fellows do. It's such nonsense, I mean, to call it being drunk. Of course I'm awfully sorry. I've had such a beastly headache all day.

BARTHWICK. Tcha! If you'd only had the common decency to remember what happened when you came in. Then we should know what truth there was in what this fellow says — as it is, it's all the most confounded darkness.

JACK [*staring as though at half-formed visions*]. I just get a — and then — it's gone ——

MRS. BARTHWICK. Oh, Jack! do you mean to say you were so tipsy you can't even remember ——

JACK. Look here, Mother! Of course I remember I came — I must have come ——

BARTHWICK [*unguardedly, and walking up and down*]. Tcha! — and that infernal purse! Good Heavens! It'll get into the papers. Who on earth could have foreseen a thing like this? Better to have lost a dozen cigarette-boxes, and said nothing about it. [*To his wife*] It's all your doing. I told you so from the first. I wish to goodness Roper would come!

MRS. BARTHWICK [*sharply*]. I don't know what you're talking about, John.

BARTHWICK [*turning on her*]. No, you — you — you don't know anything! [*Sharply*] Where the devil is Roper? If he can see a way out of this he's a better man than I take him for. I defy *any one* to see a way out of it. *I* can't.

JACK. Look here, don't excite Dad — I can simply say I was too beastly tired, and don't remember anything except that I came in and [*in a dying voice*] went to bed the same as usual.

BARTHWICK. Went to bed? Who knows where you went — I've lost all confidence. For all I know you slept on the floor.

JACK [*indignantly*]. I didn't, I slept on the ——

BARTHWICK [*sitting on the sofa*]. Who cares where you slept; what does it matter if he mentions the — the — a perfect disgrace?

MRS. BARTHWICK. *What?* [*A silence*] I *insist* on knowing.

JACK. Oh! nothing ——

MRS. BARTHWICK. Nothing? What do you mean by nothing, Jack? There's your father in such a state about it ——

JACK. It's only my purse.

MRS. BARTHWICK. Your purse! You know perfectly well you haven't got one.

JACK. Well, it was somebody else's — it was all a joke — I didn't want the beastly thing ——

MRS. BARTHWICK. Do you mean that you had another person's purse, and that this man took it too?

BARTHWICK. Tcha! Of course he took it too! A man like that Jones will make the most of it. It'll get into the papers.

MRS. BARTHWICK. I don't understand. What on earth is all the fuss about? [*Bending over* JACK, *and softly*] Jack now, tell me dear! Don't be afraid. What is it? Come!

JACK. Oh, don't, Mother!

MRS. BARTHWICK. But don't what, dear?

JACK. It was pure sport. I don't know how I got the thing. Of course I'd had a bit of a row — I didn't know what I was doing — I was — I was — well, you know — I suppose I must have pulled the bag out of her hand.

MRS. BARTHWICK. Out of her hand? Whose hand? What bag — whose bag?

JACK. Oh! I don't know — *her* bag — it belonged to — [*in a desperate and rising voice*] a woman.

MRS. BARTHWICK. A woman? *Oh! Jack! No!*

JACK [*jumping up*]. You *would* have it. I didn't want to tell you. It's not my fault.

[*The door opens and* MARLOW *ushers in a man of middle age, inclined to corpulence, in evening dress. He has a ruddy, thin moustache, and dark, quick-moving little eyes. His eyebrows are Chinese*]

MARLOW. Mr. Roper, sir.

[*He leaves the room*]

ROPER [*with a quick look round*]. How do you do?

[*But neither* JACK *nor* MRS. BARTHWICK *make a sign*]

BARTHWICK [*hurrying*]. Thank goodness you've come, Roper. You remember what I told you this afternoon; we've just had the detective here.

ROPER. Got the box?

BARTHWICK. Yes, yes, but look here — it wasn't the charwoman at all; her drunken loafer of a husband took the things — he says that fellow there [*He waves his hand at* JACK, *who, with his shoulder raised, seems trying to ward off a blow*] let him into the house last night. Can you imagine such a thing!

[ROPER *laughs*]

BARTHWICK [*with excited emphasis*]. It's no laughing matter, Roper. I told you about that business of Jack's too — don't you see — the brute took both the things — took that infernal purse. It'll get into the papers.

ROPER [*raising his eyebrows*]. H'm! The purse! Depravity in high life! What does your son say?

BARTHWICK. He remembers nothing. D——n! Did you ever see such a mess? It'll get into the papers.

MRS. BARTHWICK [*with her hand across her eyes*]. Oh! it's not that ——

[BARTHWICK *and* ROPER *turn and look at her*]

BARTHWICK. It's the idea of that woman — she's just heard —— [ROPER *nods. And* MRS. BARTHWICK, *setting her lips, gives a slow look at* JACK, *and sits down at the table*] What on earth's to be done, Roper? A ruffian like this Jones will make all the capital he can out of that purse.

MRS. BARTHWICK. I don't believe that Jack took that purse.

BARTHWICK. What — when the woman came here for it this morning?

MRS. BARTHWICK. Here? She had the impudence? Why wasn't I told?

[*She looks round from face to face — no one answers her, there is a pause*]

BARTHWICK [*suddenly*]. What's to be done, Roper?

ROPER [*quietly to* JACK]. I suppose you didn't leave your latch-key in the door?

JACK [*sullenly*]. Yes, I did.

BARTHWICK. Good heavens! What next?

MRS. BARTHWICK. I'm certain you never let that man into the house, Jack, it's a wild invention. I'm sure there's not a word of truth in it, Mr. Roper.

ROPER [*very suddenly*]. Where did you sleep last night?

JACK [*promptly*]. On the sofa, there — [*hesitating*] that is — I ——

BARTHWICK. On the sofa? D' you mean to say you didn't go to bed?

JACK [*sullenly*]. No.

BARTHWICK. If you don't remember anything, how can you remember that?

JACK. Because I woke up there in the morning.

MRS. BARTHWICK. Oh, Jack!

BARTHWICK. Good Gracious!

JACK. And Mrs. Jones saw me. I wish you wouldn't bait me so.

ROPER. Do you remember giving any one a drink?

JACK. By Jove, I do seem to remember a fellow with — a fellow with — [*He looks at* ROPER] I say, d' you want me ——?

ROPER [*quick as lightning*]. With a dirty face?

JACK [*with illumination*]. I do — I distinctly remember his ——

[BARTHWICK *moves abruptly;* MRS. BARTHWICK *looks at* ROPER *angrily, and touches her son's arm*]

MRS. BARTHWICK. You don't remember, it's ridiculous! I don't believe the man was ever here at all.

BARTHWICK. You must speak the truth, if it *is* the truth. But if you *do* remember such a dirty business, I shall wash my hands of you altogether.

JACK [*glaring at them*]. Well, what the devil ——

MRS. BARTHWICK. Jack!

JACK. Well, Mother, I — I don't know what you *do* want.

MRS. BARTHWICK. We want you to speak the truth and say you never let this low man into the house.

BARTHWICK. Of course if you think that you really gave this man whisky in that disgraceful way, and let him see what you'd been doing, and were in such a disgusting condition that you don't remember a word of it ——

ROPER [*quick*]. I've no memory myself — never had.

BARTHWICK [*desperately*]. I don't know what you're to say.

ROPER. [*To* JACK] Say nothing at all! Don't put yourself in a false position. The man stole the things or the woman stole the things, you had nothing to do with it. You were asleep on the sofa.

MRS. BARTHWICK. Your leaving the latch-key in the door was quite bad enough, there's no need to mention anything else. [*Touching his forehead softly*] My dear, how hot your head is!

JACK. But I want to know what I'm to do. [*Passionately*] I won't be badgered like this.

[MRS. BARTHWICK *recoils from him*]

ROPER [*very quickly*]. You forget all about it. You were asleep.

JACK. Must I go down to the Court to-morrow?

ROPER [*shaking his head*]. No.

BARTHWICK [*in a relieved voice*]. Is that so?

ROPER. Yes.

BARTHWICK. But *you'll* go, Roper.

ROPER. Yes.

JACK [*with wan cheerfulness*]. Thanks, awfully! So long as I don't have to go. [*Putting his hand up to his head*] I think if you'll excuse me — I've had a most beastly day.

[*He looks from his father to his mother*]

MRS. BARTHWICK [*turning quickly*]. Good-night, my boy.

JACK. Good-night, Mother.

[*He goes out.* MRS. BARTHWICK *heaves a sigh. There is a silence*]

BARTHWICK. He gets off too easily. But for my money that woman would have prosecuted him.

ROPER. You find money useful.

BARTHWICK. I've my doubts whether we ought to hide the truth ——

ROPER. There'll be a remand.

BARTHWICK. What! D' you mean he'll have to *appear* on the remand.

ROPER. Yes.

BARTHWICK. H'm, I thought you'd be able to —— Look here, Roper, you *must* keep that purse out of the papers.

[ROPER *fixes his little eyes on him and nods*]

MRS. BARTHWICK. Mr. Roper, don't you think the magistrate ought to be told what sort of people these Jones's are; I mean about their immorality before they were married. I don't know if John told you.

ROPER. Afraid it's not material.

MRS. BARTHWICK. Not material?

ROPER. Purely private life! May have happened to the magistrate.

BARTHWICK [*with a movement as if to shift a burden*]. Then you'll take the thing into your hands?

Roper. If the gods are kind.

[*He holds his hand out*]

Barthwick [*shaking it dubiously*]. Kind — eh? What? You going?

Roper. Yes. I've another case, something like yours — most unexpected.

[*He bows to* Mrs. Barthwick, *and goes out, followed by* Barthwick, *talking to the last.* Mrs. Barthwick *at the table bursts into smothered sobs.* Barthwick *returns*]

Barthwick. [*To himself*] There'll be a scandal!

Mrs. Barthwick [*disguising her grief at once*] I simply can't imagine what Roper means by making a joke of a thing like that!

Barthwick [*staring strangely*]. You! You can't imagine anything! You've no more imagination than a fly!

Mrs. Barthwick [*angrily*]. You dare to tell me that I have no imagination.

Barthwick [*flustered*]. I — I'm upset. From beginning to end, the whole thing has been utterly against my principles.

Mrs. Barthwick. Rubbish! You haven't any! Your principles are nothing in the world but sheer — fright!

Barthwick [*walking to the window*]. I've never been frightened in my life. You heard what Roper said. It's enough to upset one when a thing like this happens. Everything one says and does seems to turn in one's mouth — it's — it's uncanny. It's not the sort of thing I've been accustomed to. [*As though stifling, he throws the window open. The faint sobbing of a child comes in*] What's that? [*They listen*]

Mrs. Barthwick [*sharply*]. I can't stand that crying. I must send Marlow to stop it. My nerves are all on edge.

[*She rings the bell*]

Barthwick. I'll shut the window; you'll hear nothing.

[*He shuts the window. There is silence*]

Mrs. Barthwick [*sharply*]. That's no good! It's on my nerves. Nothing upsets me like a child's crying. [Marlow *comes in*] What's that noise of crying, Marlow? It sounds like a child.

Barthwick. It is a child. I can see it against the railings.

Marlow [*opening the window, and looking out — quietly*]. It's Mrs. Jones's little boy, ma'am; he came here after his mother.

Mrs. Barthwick [*moving quickly to the window*]. Poor little chap! John, we oughtn't to go on with this!

Barthwick [*sitting heavily in a chair*]. Ah! but it's out of our hands!

[Mrs. Barthwick *turns her back to the window. There is an expression of distress on her face. She stands motionless, compressing her lips. The crying begins again.* Barthwick *covers his ears with his hands, and* Marlow *shuts the window. The crying ceases*]

[*The curtain falls*]

ACT III

Eight days have passed, and the scene is a London Police Court at one o'clock. A canopied seat of Justice is surmounted by the lion and unicorn. Before the fire a worn-looking Magistrate *is warming his coat-tails, and staring at two little girls in faded blue and orange rags, who are placed before the dock. Close to the witness-box is a* Relieving Officer *in an overcoat, and a short brown beard. Beside the little girls stands a bald* Police Constable. *On the front bench are sitting* Barthwick *and* Roper, *and behind them* Jack. *In the railed enclosure are seedy-looking men and women. Some prosperous constables sit or stand about*]

Magistrate [*in his paternal and ferocious voice, hissing his s's*]. Now let us dispose of these young ladies.

Usher. Theresa Livens, Maud Livens. [*The bald* Constable *indicates the little girls, who remain silent, disillusioned, inattentive*] Relieving officer!

[*The* Relieving Officer *steps into the witness-box*]

Usher. The evidence you give to the Court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God! Kiss the book!

[*The book is kissed*]

Relieving Officer [*in a monotone, pausing slightly at each sentence end, that his evidence may be inscribed*] About ten o'clock this morning, your Worship, I found these two little girls in Blue

Street, Pulham, crying outside a public-house. Asked where their home was, they said they had no home. Mother had gone away. Asked about their father. Their father had no work. Asked where they slept last night. At their aunt's. I've made inquiries, your Worship. The wife has broken up the home and gone on the streets. The husband is out of work and living in common lodging-houses. The husband's sister has eight children of her own, and says she can't afford to keep these little girls any longer.

MAGISTRATE [*returning to his seat beneath the canopy of Justice*]. Now, let me see. You say the mother is on the streets; what evidence have you of that?

RELIEVING OFFICER. I have the husband here, your Worship.

MAGISTRATE. Very well; then let us see him. [*There are cries of* "LIVENS." *The* MAGISTRATE *leans forward, and stares with hard compassion at the little girls.* LIVENS *comes in. He is quiet, with grizzled hair, and a muffler for a collar. He stands beside the witness-box*] And you are their father? Now, why don't you keep your little girls at home? How is it you leave them to wander about the streets like this?

LIVENS. I've got no home, your Worship. I'm living from 'and to mouth. I've got no work; and nothin' to keep them on.

MAGISTRATE. How is that?

LIVENS [*ashamedly*]. My wife, she broke my 'ome up, and pawned the things.

MAGISTRATE. But what made you let her?

LIVENS. Your Worship, I'd no chance to stop 'er; she did it when I was out lookin' for work.

MAGISTRATE. Did you ill-treat her?

LIVENS [*emphatically*]. I never raised my 'and to her in my life, your Worship.

MAGISTRATE. Then what was it — did she drink?

LIVENS. Yes, your Worship.

MAGISTRATE. Was she loose in her behaviour?

LIVENS [*in a low voice*]. Yes, your Worship.

MAGISTRATE. And where is she now?

LIVENS. I don't know, your Worship. She went off with a man, and after that I ——

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes. Who knows anything of her? [*To the bald* CONSTABLE] Is she known here?

RELIEVING OFFICER. Not in this district, your Worship; but I have ascertained that she is well known ——

MAGISTRATE. Yes — yes; we'll stop at that. Now [*to the father*] you say that she has broken up your home, and left these little girls. What provision can you make for them? You look a strong man.

LIVENS. So I am, your Worship. I'm willin' enough to work, but for the life of me I can't get anything to do.

MAGISTRATE. But have you tried?

LIVENS. I've tried everything, your Worship — I've tried my 'ardest.

MAGISTRATE. Well, well ——

[*There is a silence*]

RELIEVING OFFICER. If your Worship thinks it's a case, my people are willing to take them.

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes, I know; but I've no evidence that this man is not the proper guardian for his children.

[*He rises and goes back to the fire*]

RELIEVING OFFICER. The mother, your Worship, is able to get access to them.

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes; the mother, of course, is an improper person to have anything to do with them. [*To the father*] Well, now what do you say?

LIVENS. Your Worship, I can only say that if I could get work I should be only too willing to provide for them. But what can I do, your Worship? Here I am obliged to live from 'and to mouth in these 'ere common lodging-houses. I'm a strong man — I'm willing to work — I'm half as alive again as some of 'em — but you see, your Worship, my 'air's turned a bit, owing to the fever — [*touches his hair*] — and that's against me; and I don't seem to get a chance anyhow.

MAGISTRATE. Yes — yes. [*Slowly*] Well, I think it's a case. [*Staring his hardest at the little girls*] Now, are you willing that these little girls should be sent to a home?

LIVENS. Yes, your Worship, I should be very willing.

MAGISTRATE. Well, I'll remand them for a week. Bring them again to-day week; if I see no reason against it then, I'll make an order.

RELIEVING OFFICER. To-day week, your Worship.

[*The bald* CONSTABLE *takes the little girls out by the shoulders.*

The father follows them. The MAGISTRATE, *returning to his seat, bends over and talks to his* CLERK *inaudibly*]

BARTHWICK [*speaking behind his hand*]. A painful case, Roper; very distressing state of things.

ROPER. Hundreds like this in the Police Courts.

BARTHWICK. Most distressing! The more I see of it, the more important this question of the condition of the people seems to become. I shall certainly make a point of taking up the cudgels in the House. I shall move ——

[*The* MAGISTRATE *ceases talking to his* CLERK]

CLERK. Remands!

[BARTHWICK *stops abruptly. There is a stir and* MRS. JONES *comes in by the public door;* JONES, *ushered by policemen, comes from the prisoners' door. They file into the dock*]

CLERK. James Jones, Jane Jones.

USHER. Jane Jones!

BARTHWICK [*in a whisper*]. The purse — the purse *must* be kept out of it, Roper. Whatever happens you must keep that out of the papers.

[ROPER *nods*]

BALD CONSTABLE. Hush!

[MRS. JONES, *dressed in her thin, black, wispy dress, and black straw hat, stands motionless with hands crossed on the front rail of the dock.* JONES *leans against the back rail of the dock, and keeps half turning, glancing defiantly about him. He is haggard and unshaven*]

CLERK [*consulting with his papers*]. This is the case remanded from last Wednesday, sir. Theft of a silver cigarette-box and assault on the police; the two charges were taken together. Jane Jones! James Jones!

MAGISTRATE [*staring*]. Yes, yes; I remember.

CLERK. Jane Jones.

MRS. JONES. Yes, sir.

CLERK. Do you admit stealing a silver cigarette-box valued at five pounds, ten shillings, from the house of John Barthwick, M. P., between the hours of 11 P.M. on Easter Monday and 8.45 A.M. on Easter Tuesday last? Yes, or no?

MRS. JONES [*in a low voice*]. No, sir, I do not, sir.

CLERK. James Jones? Do you admit stealing a silver cigarette-box valued at five pounds, ten shillings, from the house of John Barthwick, M. P., between the hours of 11 P.M. on Easter Monday and 8.45 A.M. on Easter Tuesday last? And further making an assault on the police when in the execution of their duty at 3 P.M. on Easter Tuesday? Yes or no?

JONES [*sullenly*]. Yes, but I've got a lot to say about it.

MAGISTRATE. [*To the* CLERK] Yes — yes. But how comes it that these two people are charged with the same offence? Are they husband and wife?

CLERK. Yes, sir. You remember you ordered a remand for further evidence as to the story of the male prisoner.

MAGISTRATE. Have they been in custody since?

CLERK. You released the woman on her own recognisances, sir.

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes, this is the case of the silver box; I remember now. Well?

CLERK. Thomas Marlow.

[*The cry of* "Thomas Marlow" *is repeated.* MARLOW *comes in, and steps into the witness-box*]

USHER. The evidence you give to the court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God. Kiss the book.

[*The book is kissed. The silver box is handed up, and placed on the rail*]

CLERK [*reading from his papers*]. Your name is Thomas Marlow? Are you butler to John Barthwick, M. P., of 6, Rockingham Gate?

MARLOW. Yes, sir.

CLERK. Is that the box?

MARLOW. Yes, sir.

CLERK. And did you miss the same at 8.45 on the following morning, on going to remove the tray?

MARLOW. Yes, sir.

CLERK. Is the female prisoner known to you? [MARLOW *nods*] Is she the charwoman employed at 6, Rockingham Gate? [*Again* MARLOW *nods*] Did you at the time of your missing the box find her in the room alone?

MARLOW. Yes, sir.

CLERK. Did you afterwards communicate the loss to your employer, and did he send you to the police station?

MARLOW. Yes, sir.

CLERK. [*To* MRS. JONES] Have you anything to ask him?

MRS. JONES. No, sir, nothing, thank you, sir.

CLERK. [*To* JONES] James Jones, have you anything to ask this witness?

JONES. I don't know 'im.

MAGISTRATE. Are you sure you put the box in the place you say at the time you say?

MARLOW. Yes, your Worship.

MAGISTRATE. Very well; then now let us have the officer.

[MARLOW *leaves the box, and* SNOW *goes into it*]

USHER. The evidence you give to the court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God. [*The book is kissed*]

CLERK [*reading from his papers*]. Your name is Robert Snow? You are a detective in the X. B. division of the Metropolitan police force? According to instructions received did you on Easter Tuesday last proceed to the prisoner's lodgings at 34, Merthyr Street, St. Soames's? And did you on entering see the box produced, lying on the table?

SNOW. Yes, sir.

CLERK. Is that the box?

SNOW [*fingering the box*]. Yes, sir.

CLERK. And did you thereupon take possession of it, and charge the female prisoner with theft of the box from 6, Rockingham Gate? And did she deny the same?

SNOW. Yes, sir.

CLERK. Did you take her into custody?

SNOW. Yes, sir.

MAGISTRATE. What was her behaviour?

SNOW. Perfectly quiet, your Worship. She persisted in the denial. That's all.

MAGISTRATE. Do you know her?

SNOW. No, your Worship.

MAGISTRATE. Is she known here?

BALD CONSTABLE. No, your Worship, they're neither of them known, we've nothing against them at all.

CLERK. [*To* MRS. JONES] Have you anything to ask the officer?

MRS. JONES. No, sir, thank you, I've nothing to ask him.

MAGISTRATE. Very well then — go on.

CLERK [*reading from his paper*]. And while you were taking the female prisoner did the male prisoner interpose, and endeavour to hinder you in the execution of your duty, and did he strike you a blow?

SNOW. Yes, sir.

CLERK. And did he say, "You let her go, I took the box myself"?

SNOW. He did.

CLERK. And did you blow your whistle and obtain the assistance of another constable, and take him into custody?

SNOW. I did.

CLERK. Was he violent on the way to the station, and did he use bad language, and did he several times repeat that he had taken the box himself? [SNOW *nods*] Did you thereupon ask him in what manner he had stolen the box? And did you understand him to say he had entered the house at the invitation of young Mr. Barthwick [BARTHWICK, *turning in his seat, frowns at* ROPER] after midnight on Easter Monday, and partaken of whisky, and that under the influence of the whisky he had taken the box?

SNOW. I did, sir.

CLERK. And was his demeanour throughout very violent?

SNOW. It *was* very violent.

JONES [*breaking in*]. Violent — of course it was! You put your 'ands on my wife when I kept tellin' you I took the thing myself.

MAGISTRATE [*hissing, with protruded neck*]. Now — you will have your chance of saying what you want to say presently. Have you anything to ask the officer?

JONES [*sullenly*]. No.

MAGISTRATE. Very well then. Now let us hear what the female prisoner has to say first.

MRS. JONES. Well, your Worship, of course I can only say what I've said all along, that I didn't take the box.

MAGISTRATE. Yes, but did you know that it was taken?

MRS. JONES. No, your Worship. And, of course, to what my husband says, your Worship, I can't speak of my own knowledge. Of course, I know that he came home very late on the Monday night. It was past one o'clock when he came in, and he was not himself at all.

MAGISTRATE. Had he been drinking?

MRS. JONES. Yes, your Worship.

MAGISTRATE. And was he drunk?

MRS. JONES. Yes, your Worship, he was almost quite drunk.

MAGISTRATE. And did he say anything to you?

MRS. JONES. No, your Worship, only to call me names. And of course in the morning when I got up and went to work he was asleep. And I don't know anything more about it until I came home again. Except that Mr. Barthwick — that's my employer, your Worship — told me the box was missing.

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes.

MRS. JONES. But of course when I was shaking out my husband's coat the cigarette-box fell out and all the cigarettes were scattered on the bed.

MAGISTRATE. You say all the cigarettes were scattered on the bed? [*To* SNOW] Did you see the cigarettes scattered on the bed?

SNOW. No, your Worship, I did not.

MAGISTRATE. You see he says he didn't see them.

JONES. Well, they were there for all that.

SNOW. I can't say, your Worship, that I had the opportunity of going round the room; I had all my work cut out with the male prisoner.

MAGISTRATE. [*To* MRS. JONES] Well, what more have you to say?

MRS. JONES. Of course when I saw the box, your Worship, I was dreadfully upset, and I couldn't think why he had done such a thing; when the officer came we were having words about it, because it is ruin to me, your Worship, in my profession, and I have three little children dependent on me.

MAGISTRATE [*protruding his neck*]. Yes — yes — but what did he say to you?

MRS. JONES. I asked him whatever came over him to do such a thing — and he said it was the drink. He said he had had too much to drink, and something came over him. And of course, your Worship, he had had very little to eat all day, and the drink does go to the head when you have not had enough to eat. Your Worship may not know, but it is the truth. And I would like to say that all through his married life, I have never known him to do such a thing before, though we have passed through great hardships and [*speaking with soft emphasis*] I am quite sure he would not have done it if he had been himself at the time.

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes. But don't you know that that is no excuse?

MRS. JONES. Yes, your Worship. I know that it is no excuse.

[*The* MAGISTRATE *leans over and parleys with his* CLERK]

JACK [*leaning over from his seat behind*]. I say, Dad ——

BARTHWICK. Tsst! [*Sheltering his mouth he speaks to* ROPER] Roper, you had better get up now and say that considering the circumstances and the poverty of the prisoners, we have no wish to proceed any further, and if the magistrate would deal with the case as one of disorder only on the part of——

BALD CONSTABLE. Hssshh!

[ROPER *shakes his head*]

MAGISTRATE. Now, supposing what you say and what your husband says is true, what I have to consider is — how did he obtain access to this house, and were you in any way a party to his obtaining access? You are the charwoman employed at the house?

MRS. JONES. Yes, your Worship, and of course if I had let him into the house it would have been very wrong of me; and I have never done such a thing in any of the houses where I have been employed.

MAGISTRATE. Well — so you say. Now let us hear what story the male prisoner makes of it.

JONES [*who leans with his arms on the dock behind, speaks in a slow, sullen voice*]. Wot I say is wot my wife says. I've never been 'ad up in a police court before, an' I can prove I took it when in liquor. I told her, and she can tell you the same, that I was goin' to throw the thing into the water sooner then 'ave it on my mind.

MAGISTRATE. But how did you get into the *house?*

JONES. I was passin'. I was goin' 'ome from the "Goat and Bells."

MAGISTRATE. The "Goat and Bells," — what is that? A public-house?

JONES. Yes, at the corner. It was Bank 'oliday, an' I'd 'ad a drop to drink. I see this young Mr. Barthwick tryin' to find the keyhole on the wrong side of the door.

MAGISTRATE. Well?

JONES [*slowly and with many pauses*]. Well — I 'elped 'im to find it — drunk as a lord 'e was. He goes on, an' comes back again, and says, "I've got nothin' for you," 'e says, "but come in an' 'ave a drink." So I went in just as you might 'ave done yourself. We 'ad a drink o' whisky just as you might have 'ad, 'nd

young Mr. Barthwick says to me, "Take a drink 'nd a smoke. Take anything you like," 'e says. And then he went to sleep on the sofa. I 'ad some more whisky — an' I 'ad a smoke — and I 'ad some more whisky — an' I carn't tell yer what 'appened after that.

MAGISTRATE. Do you mean to say that you were so drunk that you can remember nothing?

JACK [*softly to his father*]. I say, that's exactly what ——

BARTHWICK. Tssh!

JONES. That's what I do mean.

MAGISTRATE. And yet you say you stole the box?

JONES. I never stole the box. I took it.

MAGISTRATE [*hissing with protruded neck*]. You did not steal it — you took it. Did it belong to you — what is that but stealing?

JONES. I took it.

MAGISTRATE. You took it — you took it away from their house and you took it to your house ——

JONES [*sullenly breaking in*]. I ain't got a house.

MAGISTRATE. Very well, let us hear what this young man Mr. — Mr. Barthwick — has to say to your story.

[SNOW *leaves the witness-box. The* BALD CONSTABLE *beckons* JACK, *who, clutching his hat, goes into the witness-box.* ROPER *moves to the table set apart for his profession*]

SWEARING CLERK. The evidence you give to the court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God. Kiss the book.

[*The book is kissed*]

ROPER [*examining*]. What is your name?

JACK [*in a low voice*]. John Barthwick, Junior.

[*The* CLERK *writes it down*]

ROPER. Where do you live?

JACK. At 6, Rockingham Gate.

[*All his answers are recorded by the* CLERK]

ROPER. You are the son of the owner?

JACK [*in a very low voice*]. Yes.

ROPER. Speak up, please. Do you know the prisoners?

JACK [*looking at the* JONESES, *in a low voice*]. I've seen Mrs. Jones. I — [*in a loud voice*] don't know the man.

JONES. Well, I know you!

BALD CONSTABLE. Hssh!

ROPER. Now, did you come in late on the night of Easter Monday?

JACK. Yes.

ROPER. And did you by mistake leave your latch-key in the door?

JACK. Yes.

MAGISTRATE. Oh! You left your latch-key in the door?

ROPER. And is that all you can remember about your coming in?

JACK [*in a loud voice*]. Yes, it is.

MAGISTRATE. Now, you have heard the male prisoner's story, what do you say to that?

JACK [*turning to the* MAGISTRATE, *speaks suddenly in a confident, straightforward voice*]. The fact of the matter is, sir, that I'd been out to the theatre that night, and had supper afterwards, and I came in late.

MAGISTRATE. Do you remember this man being outside when you came in?

JACK. No, sir. [*He hesitates*] I don't think I do.

MAGISTRATE [*somewhat puzzled*]. Well, did he help you to open the door, as he says? Did *any* one help you to open the door?

JACK. No, sir — I don't think so, sir — I don't know.

MAGISTRATE. You don't know? But you must know. It isn't a usual thing for you to have the door opened for you, is it?

JACK [*with a shamefaced smile*]. No.

MAGISTRATE. Very well, then ——

JACK [*desperately*]. The fact of the matter is, sir, I'm afraid I'd had too much champagne that night.

MAGISTRATE [*smiling*]. Oh! you'd had too much champagne?

JONES. May I ask the gentleman a question?

MAGISTRATE. Yes — yes — you may ask him what questions you like.

JONES. Don't you remember you said you was a Liberal, same as your father, and you asked me wot I was?

JACK [*with his hand against his brow*]. I seem to remember ——

JONES. And I said to you, "I'm a bloomin' Conserva*tive*," I said; an' you said to me, "You look more like one of these 'ere Socialists. Take wotever you like," you said.

JACK [*with sudden resolution*]. No, I don't. I don't remember anything of the sort.

JONES. Well, I do, an' my word's as good as yours. I've never been had

up in a police court before. Look 'ere, don't you remember you had a sky-blue bag in your 'and ——

[BARTHWICK *jumps*]

ROPER. I submit to your Worship that these questions are hardly to the point, the prisoner having admitted that he himself does not remember anything. [*There is a smile on the face of Justice*] It is a case of the blind leading the blind.

JONES [*violently*]. I've done no more than wot he 'as. I'm a poor man; I've got no money an' no friends — he's a toff — he can do wot I can't.

MAGISTRATE. Now, now! All this won't help you — you must be quiet. You say you took this box? Now, what made you take it? Were you pressed for money?

JONES. I'm always pressed for money.

MAGISTRATE. Was that the reason you took it?

JONES. No.

MAGISTRATE. [*To* SNOW] Was anything found on him?

SNOW. Yes, your Worship. There was six pounds twelve shillin's found on him, and this purse.

[*The red silk purse is handed to the* MAGISTRATE. BARTHWICK *rises in his seat, but hastily sits down again*]

MAGISTRATE [*staring at the purse*]. Yes, yes — let me see — [*There is a silence*] No, no, I've nothing before me as to the purse. How did you come by all that money?

JONES [*after a long pause, suddenly*]. I declines to say.

MAGISTRATE. But if you had all that money, what made you take this box?

JONES. I took it out of spite.

MAGISTRATE [*hissing, with protruded neck*]. You took it out of spite? Well now, that's something! But do you imagine you can go about the town taking things out of spite?

JONES. If you had my life, if you'd been out of work ——

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes; I know — because you're out of work you think it's an excuse for everything.

JONES [*pointing at* JACK]. You ask *'im* wot made *'im* take the ——

ROPER [*quietly*]. Does your Worship require this witness in the box any longer?

MAGISTRATE [*ironically*]. I think not; he is hardly profitable.

[JACK *leaves the witness-box, and, hanging his head, resumes his seat*]

JONES. You ask 'im wot made 'im take the lady's ——

[*But the* BALD CONSTABLE *catches him by the sleeve*]

BALD CONSTABLE. Sssh!

MAGISTRATE [*emphatically*]. Now listen to me. I've nothing to do with what he may or may not have taken. Why did you resist the police in the execution of their duty?

JONES. It war n't their duty to take my wife, a respectable woman, that 'adn't done nothing.

MAGISTRATE. But I say it was. What made you strike the officer a blow?

JONES. Any man would a struck 'im a blow. I'd strike 'im again, I would.

MAGISTRATE. You are not making your case any better by violence. How do you suppose we could get on if everybody behaved like you?

JONES [*leaning forward, earnestly*]. Well, wot about 'er; who's to make up to 'er for this? Who's to give 'er back 'er good name?

MRS. JONES. Your Worship, it's the children that's preying on his mind, because of course I've lost my work. And I've had to find another room owing to the scandal.

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes, I know — but if he hadn't acted like this nobody would have suffered.

JONES [*glaring round at* JACK]. I've done no worse than wot 'e 'as. Wot I want to know is wot's goin' to be done to 'im.

[*The* BALD CONSTABLE *again says* "Hssh!"]

ROPER. Mr. Barthwick wishes it known, your Worship, that considering the poverty of the prisoners he does not press the charge as to the box. Perhaps your Worship would deal with the case as one of disorder.

JONES. I don't want it smothered up, I want it all dealt with fair — I want my rights ——

MAGISTRATE [*rapping his desk*]. Now you have said all you have to say, and you will be quiet. [*There is a silence; the* MAGISTRATE *bends over and parleys with his* CLERK] Yes, I think I may discharge the woman. [*In a kindly voice he addresses* MRS. JONES, *who stands unmoving with her hands*

crossed on the rail] It is very unfortunate for you that this man has behaved as he has. It is not the consequences to him but the consequences to you. You have been brought here twice, you have lost your work — [*He glares at* JONES] and this is what always happens. Now you may go away, and I am very sorry it was necessary to bring you here at all.

MRS. JONES [*softly*]. Thank you very much, your Worship.

[*She leaves the dock, and looking back at* JONES, *twists her fingers and is still*]

MAGISTRATE. Yes, yes, but I can't pass it over. Go away, there's a good woman. [MRS. JONES *stands back. The* MAGISTRATE *leans his head on his hand: then raising it he speaks to* JONES] Now, listen to me. Do you wish the case to be settled here, or do you wish it to go before a jury?

JONES [*muttering*]. I don't want no jury.

MAGISTRATE. Very well then, I will deal with it here. [*After a pause*] You have pleaded guilty to stealing this box —

JONES. Not to stealin' —

BALD CONSTABLE. Hssshh!

MAGISTRATE. And to assaulting the police ——

JONES. Any man as was a man ——

MAGISTRATE. Your conduct here has been most improper. You give the excuse that you were drunk when you stole the box. I tell you that is no excuse. If you choose to get drunk and break the law afterwards you must take the consequences. And let me tell you that men like you, who get drunk and give way to your spite or whatever it is that's in you, are — are — a *nuisance to the community.*

JACK [*leaning from his seat*]. Dad! that's what you said to me!

BARTHWICK. Tsst!

[*There is a silence, while the* MAGISTRATE *consults his* CLERK; JONES *leans forward waiting*]

MAGISTRATE. This is your first offence, and I am going to give you a light sentence. [*Speaking sharply, but without expression*] One month with hard labour.

[*He bends, and parleys with his* CLERK. *The* BALD CONSTABLE *and another help* JONES *from the dock*]

JONES [*stopping and twisting round*]. Call this justice? What about 'im? 'E got drunk! 'E took the purse — 'e took the purse but [*in a muffled shout*] it's *'is money* got *'im* off — *Justice!*

[*The prisoner's door is shut on* JONES, *and from the seedy-looking men and women comes a hoarse and whispering groan*]

MAGISTRATE. We will now adjourn for lunch! [*He rises from his seat*]

[*The Court is in a stir.* ROPER *gets up and speaks to the reporter.* JACK, *throwing up his head, walks with a swagger to the corridor;* BARTHWICK *follows*]

MRS. JONES [*turning to him with a humble gesture*]. Oh! sir! ——

[BARTHWICK *hesitates, then yielding to his nerves, he makes a shame-faced gesture of refusal, and hurries out of court.* MRS. JONES *stands looking after him*]

[*The curtain falls*]

THE CASSILIS ENGAGEMENT

(1907)

BY ST. JOHN HANKIN

ST. JOHN EMILE CLAVERING HANKIN

(1869–1909)

The "New Drama" sought, not only to express itself through a new form, but to frame for itself a new code of morals. This new code was in no way over-emotional, but was marked by a common sense which placed the social fact above any startling invention on the part of the playwright, and which centered the interest more on the intellectual side of a thesis stated, than on the side of any great passion or partisan spirit. Of course, this "New Drama" varied in accord with the temperaments of the dramatists; the difference between them is one of degree rather than one of kind. The consequence is, during the experimental period, when the English dramatic renaissance was fighting for its very existence, it was indeed fortunate that men of independent means, like St. John Hankin, were able to stand against the wall, and fight for those principles which were to bring back into the theatre sanity and an interest in true criticism of life.

St. John Hankin possessed the common sense which is characteristic of Shaw. He likewise had some of that intellectual wit which is a large part of Shaw. He stands midway between Oscar Wilde and Shaw, possessing characteristics in common with both, and yet differing from them through difference in personality. For, as one critic has pointed out, Hankin's wit is not as reckless as that of Wilde, and his social conscience is not pledged, as Shaw's conscience is, to propaganda utterances. A difference which distinguishes him from both Shaw and Wilde is this — that, whereas his wit reveals him as deeply analytical of human nature, he always writes in such manner that what he makes his characters say is in thorough consonance with what they would say under given conditions. Oscar Wilde uttered brilliant statements that any of his characters could have made. In other words, they spoke the brilliancy of Oscar Wilde. Shaw has his characters make social statements which are his own social beliefs. But Hankin is true to his characters; so true and just, indeed, that one sometimes doubts whether he has any real feeling toward them. One cannot help but believe that in Galworthy's "Justice", the judicial fairness in stating the case is detrimental to the emotional value of the piece for the audience. He is eminently fair in his solution, but emotion and passion presuppose a sympathy which is not one of the predominating characteristics of the "New Drama." Stanley Houghton's "Hindle Wakes", J. O. Francis's "Change" — the Welsh play of Syndicalism — Githa Sowerby's "Rutherford and Son" — all of these are more or less predominantly intellectual, and reach out for a new code of living.

St. John Hankin was born of Cornish stock, in Southampton, on September 25. 1869. His father was a school-teacher. His mother had an independent fortune. When he was fourteen, he entered Malvern College with a scholarship, and three years afterwards won a post-mastership at Merton College, Oxford. His university career is marked by a continued succession of honours in the classics. After

graduating, he entered journalism in London, and contributed many papers to *The Saturday Review.* By the year 1894, he was in India, on the staff of the *Indian Daily News*, Calcutta; but malaria drove him home within a year, and he associated himself with the *London Times*, writing dramatic criticism and miscellaneous articles. He was often a contributor to *Punch*, and, in 1901, he published "Mr. Punch's Dramatic Sequels", writing supplementary acts to the classic dramas; followed, in 1904, by "Lost Masterpieces", in which he parodied famous authors. This clever literary feat of continuing a story beyond the author's intention was applied to himself in the "Introduction" to three of his plays, supposed, by the London critics, to have been marred through their lack of "happy endings."

His first play, "The Two Mr. Wetherbys", was given by The London Stage Society, on February 3, 1903. Evidently Hankin put much of himself into his writing, for we are told that the strain of journalistic work made him definitely retire, in 1904, to Campden, Gloucestershire, where he busied himself with translating Brieux's "Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont", given by The Stage Society in 1905, and by writing an original comedy, "The Return of the Prodigal", given by Vedrenne and Barker, on September 26, 1905. "The Charity that Began at Home" and "The Cassilis Engagement" were produced during the seasons of 1906–1907, by The London Stage Society, and thereafter became dramas in the repertory houses of Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow. His "The Last of the De Mullins", described as "merciless realism", was given by The Stage Society in December, 1908. In addition to these, there are two one-act plays, "The Burglar who Failed" (1908), and "The Constant Lover" (1912), to his credit. This list represents the activities of St. John Hankin as a playwright.

His ill-health continued, and in 1907 he developed neurasthenia. It was while at the baths of Llandrindod Wells that he drowned himself in the river Ithon, on June 15, 1909. A three-act drama, entitled "Thompson", was left incomplete. It was finished by George Calderon, and produced in 1913.

We have selected for inclusion in the present collection "The Cassilis Engagement" as representative of Hankin in most of the characteristics which mark the majority of his plays. The reader is recommended to the introductory essay by John Drinkwater, in the definitive edition of St. John Hankin's Works. But more enlightening even than what Drinkwater has to say are the several essays which are included in the third volume of the plays. These not only give Hankin's attitude toward his own work, but likewise toward the progressive theatre movement, of which he was such a necessary and healthy part.

In Hankin's "A Note on Happy Endings", defending the sane and sensible attitude of *Mrs. Cassilis* toward the engagement, he claims:

> So the engagement was broken off and any one who does not realise that it was a "happy ending" for all parties must be perfectly imbecile. But this is to judge my play as a piece of real life and not as the plot of a comedy, and that is an intellectual feat which seems to be beyond the capacity of the average critic. By him therefore the breaking off of the Cassilis Engagement, instead of being welcomed as matter for rejoicing, was received with mingled tears and curses. Our dramatic critics when they enter a theatre seem to leave all sense of reality outside and judge what they see there by some purely artificial standard which they would never dream of applying to the fortunes of themselves or their friends. To them all engagements are satisfactory and

> all marriages are made in Heaven, and at the mere thought of wedding bells they dodder like romantic old women in an almshouse. No wonder they have reduced our drama to the last stage of intellectual decrepitude.

And, with his usual interest in what happens after it is all over, Hankin adds another act to his play when he writes:

> *Geoffrey Cassilis* married Mabel to the delight of their respective mothers and of the whole county, and unless they break their necks in the hunting field nothing seems likely to interrupt the even tenor of their happiness. They live down at Deynham in that little house on the edge of the Park the prospect of which so appalled *Ethel Borridge*, and there is now a little *Geoffrey* to follow in the footsteps of his fond father. I only hope when he is grown-up and in his turn falls in love with the inevitable chorus girl, his grandmother will be alive to save him from the consequences of his folly. For I doubt if she has ever dared to tell *Mabel* or *Geoffrey* her secret for dealing with romantic attachments of this kind. *Ethel Borridge* married *Lord Buckfastleigh* as soon as he became a widower — and worried that venerable nobleman into his grave in six months. So she also "ended happily."

By this, one can see what is meant when St. John Hankin is accused of having only a passing interest in his characters, — in being completely through with them after his play is finished, and in failing to awaken in his audience any deeper emotion or interest than one would feel in being party to a situation between people one does not know or have much concern about.

Yet, there is great artistry in Hankin's delineation of character, even though there is a tendency on his part to lose interest in his invention, and to resort to very commonplace solutions and very old-fashioned means of bringing his plays to an end. "The Two Mr. Wetherbys" is an illustration of this.

His plays, read in succession, will show an increasing development on Hankin's part. They grow by accumulation of good qualities, rather than by any distinct demarkation of workmanship. It is futile to argue what advance Hankin would have made had he lived. We can only say that what he did do was of inestimable service in the advance of the "New Drama", and showed an increasing surety in technique. What keeps them from an assured place in the future is their lack of spontaneity, which real wit should have, and their lack of passion, which is at the basis of all human life.

THE CASSILIS ENGAGEMENT

A COMEDY FOR MOTHERS

By ST. JOHN HANKIN

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CHARACTERS

Presented at the Imperial Theatre, London, by the Stage Society, under the directorship of Miss Madge McIntosh, February 10, 1907.

Mrs. Cassilis		Miss Evelyn Weeden
Geoffrey Cassilis	*her son*	Mr. Langhorne Burton
Lady Marchmont	*her sister*	Miss Gertrude Burnett
The Countess of Remenham		Miss Florence Haydon
Major Warrington	*her brother*	Mr. Sam Sothern
Lady Mabel Venning	*her daughter*	Miss Isabel Roland
Mrs. Borridge		Miss Clare Greet
Ethel Borridge	*her daughter*	Miss Maudi Darrell
The Rev. Hildebrand Herries	*the Rector*	Mr. F. Morland
Mrs. Herries	*his wife*	Miss K. M. Romsey
Watson	*butler at Deynham*	Mr. Ralf Hutton
Dorset	*Mrs. Cassilis's maid*	Miss Margaret Mackenzie
Two Footmen		

The action of the play passes at Deynham Abbey, Mrs. Cassilis's house in Leicestershire, Act I in the Drawing-room, Act II on the Lawn, Act III in the Smoking-room, and Act IV in the Morning-room. One night passes between Acts I and II and between Acts III and IV, one week between Acts II and III.

Note. — The Leicestershire Cassilises pronounce their name as it is spelt.

THE CASSILIS ENGAGEMENT

ACT I

SCENE. — *The white drawing-room at Deynham Abbey, a very handsome room furnished in the Louis Seize style. There are big double doors at the back, and a large tea-table, with teacups, etc., on cloth, stands rather to the left of them. There is a large French window open on the left of the stage, with a sofa in front of it facing the view. On the opposite side of the room is the fireplace, but there is no fire as the month is August. Two or three arm-chairs stand near it. When the curtain rises the* RECTOR *is standing judicially on the hearthrug. He seems about to hum a tune, but thinks better of it.* MRS. HERRIES *is standing by the window. Presently she crosses to her husband, and sits in one of the arm-chairs. The* RECTOR *is a rubicund, humorous-looking man of fifty; his wife a prosperous-looking lady a few years younger.*

MRS. HERRIES. I wonder what can be keeping Mrs. Cassilis?

RECTOR [*back to fire*]. My dear, I told you we oughtn't to have called. On so sad an occasion ——

MRS. HERRIES. My dear Hildebrand, it's just on these sad occasions that a visit is so consoling. One should always call after a birth, a funeral ——

BUTLER [*showing in* LADY REMENHAM *and her daughter*]. I will tell Mrs. Cassilis you are here, my lady. She will be down in a moment.

LADY REMENHAM. Thank you. How do you do, Mrs. Herries? How do you do, Rector?

[LADY REMENHAM *goes towards fireplace and shakes hands. She is a dignified old lady of about sixty. Her normal expression is one of placid self-assurance, but to-day she has the air of disapproving of something or somebody.* MABEL *is a very pretty girl of two and twenty.* LADY REMENHAM *seats herself comfortably by* MRS. HERRIES. MABEL *goes over to window, where the* RECTOR *joins her*]

MRS. HERRIES. How do you do, Lady Remenham?

RECTOR. How do you do, Mabel?

LADY REMENHAM. You've heard this dreadful news, haven't you?

[RECTOR *makes sympathetic gesture*]

MRS. HERRIES. Yes. Poor Mrs. Cassilis.

LADY REMENHAM. Poor Adelaide, indeed! That unhappy boy! But there! How any mother can allow such a thing to happen passes my comprehension. To get engaged!

RECTOR [*nods sympathetically*]. Just so.

LADY REMENHAM. Engagements are such troublesome things. They sometimes even lead to marriage. But we'll hope it won't be as bad as that in this case. You've not heard who she is, I suppose?

MRS. HERRIES [*shaking her head mournfully*]. No.

LADY REMENHAM. Ah! Some one quite impossible, of course. Otherwise Adelaide would have told me in her letter.

MRS. HERRIES. I'm afraid so.

LADY REMENHAM [*irritably*]. It's really extremely wicked of Geoffrey. And so silly, too! — which is worse. A temporary infatuation I could understand, terminated by some small monetary payment. It would have been regrettable, of course, but young men are like that. And Adelaide could have stopped it out of his allowance. But an engagement! I am quite shocked at her.

MABEL [*at window, turning to her mother*]. Don't you think, mamma, we

might leave Mrs. Cassilis to manage her son's affairs her own way?

LADY REMENHAM. She has *not* managed them. That's exactly what I complain of. I can't altogether acquit the Rector of some blame in the matter. He was Geoffrey's tutor for years. They used to say in *my* young days, "Train up a child in the way he should go ——"

RECTOR [*attempting a mild jest*]. And when he's grown up he'll give you a great deal of anxiety. So they did! So they did!

LADY REMENHAM [*severely*]. That is not the ending *I* remember.

RECTOR. That is the Revised Version.

[MRS. HERRIES *frowns. She feels this is not a moment for levity*]

LADY REMENHAM. I dare say. They seem to alter everything nowadays. But, if so, I hardly see the use of education.

RECTOR [*obstinately cheerful*]. I have long been of that opinion, Lady Remenham.

[MRS. CASSILIS, *in a charming flutter of apologies, enters at this moment. She is a very pretty woman of forty, tall and graceful, and exquisitely dressed*]

MRS. CASSILIS. You *must* forgive me all of you. I had some letters to finish. [*General handshake. Kiss to* MABEL] Dear Mabel. How do you do, Mrs. Herries?

RECTOR. How do you do, Mrs. Cassilis?

LADY REMENHAM. My dear Adelaide, *what* a charming gown! But you always do have the most delightful clothes. Where *do* you get them?

MRS. CASSILIS. Clarice made this.

[*Two footmen bring the tea-table down into the middle of the room. The* BUTLER, *who has brought in a teapot on a salver, places it on the table, and brings up a chair for* MRS. CASSILIS. *The footmen go out*]

LADY REMENHAM. Clarice? The wretch! She always makes my things atrociously. If only I had your figure!

MRS. CASSILIS. Excuse me, dear. [*To* BUTLER] The carriage has gone to the station to meet Lady Marchmont, Watson?

BUTLER. Yes, madam. It started five minutes ago. [*Exit* BUTLER]

MRS. CASSILIS. [*To* LADY REMENHAM] I'm so glad you like it.

[*Goes to tea-table and seats herself*]

LADY REMENHAM. Is Margaret coming to stay with you?

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes, for ten days.

LADY REMENHAM [*drawing chair up to table*]. And now will you please pour out my tea? I have come here to scold you, and I shall require several cups.

MRS. CASSILIS [*quite cheerful*]. To scold *me?* Won't you all bring your chairs to the table? [*They all do so*] Rector, where are you? [*To* LADY REMENHAM] Cream?

LADY REMENHAM. Thank you. And a small lump.

MRS. CASSILIS. And why am I to be scolded?

LADY REMENHAM. You know quite well. [*Sternly*] Adelaide, what is this I hear about Geoffrey's engagement?

MRS. CASSILIS [*not at all disturbed*]. Oh, that? Yes, Geoffrey has got engaged to a girl in London. Isn't it *romantic* of him! I know nothing whatever about her except that I believe she has no money, and Geoffrey is over head and ears in love with her.

MRS. HERRIES [*blandly*]. My dear Mrs. Cassilis, I should have thought *that* was quite enough!

MRS. CASSILIS. Rector, will you cut that cake? It's just by your hand.

LADY REMENHAM [*refusing to be diverted from the task of cross-examination*]. Where did he meet her?

MRS. CASSILIS. In an omnibus, I understand.

LADY REMENHAM [*scandalised*]. An omnibus!

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. That was so *romantic*, too! One of the horses fell down, and she was frightened. They thought she was going to faint. Geoffrey got her out, took charge of her, discovered her address, and took her home. Wasn't it *clever* of him? Of course she asked him to come in. He was introduced to her mother. And now they're engaged.

[*Gives cup to* RECTOR]

LADY REMENHAM [*with awful dignity*]. And what is the name of this young person?

MRS. CASSILIS. Borridge.

LADY REMENHAM. Borridge! Mabel, my love, pray remember if ever you

come home and inform me that you are engaged to a person of the name of Borridge I shall whip you.

[*Puts down cup*]

MABEL. Very well, mamma.

MRS. CASSILIS. Another cup?

LADY REMENHAM. Thank you. Rather less sugar this time. [*Gives cup*] I never could understand why you let Geoffrey be in London at all. Alone too. Young men ought never to be allowed out alone at his age. They are so susceptible.

MABEL. Geoffrey has his profession, mamma.

MRS. CASSILIS. Geoffrey's at the Bar, you know.

LADY REMENHAM. The Bar! What business has Geoffrey to be at the Bar! Deynham has the best shooting in the Shires, and in the winter there's the hunting. What more does he want? It's disgraceful.

RECTOR [*another mild effort at humour*]. My dear Lady Remenham, you're sure you're not confusing the *Bar* with the *Dock?*

MRS. HERRIES. Hildebrand!

LADY REMENHAM [*impatiently*]. The Bar is a good enough profession, of course. But only for *very* younger sons. Geoffrey will have Deynham some day, and twelve thousand a year. I don't think Adelaide need have made a little attorney of him.

MRS. CASSILIS. Young men must do *something*, don't you think?

LADY REMENHAM [*briskly*]. Certainly not! It's this vulgar Radical notion that people ought to *do* things that is ruining English Society. What did Mr. Borridge *do*, by the way?

MRS. CASSILIS [*hesitates*]. He was a bookmaker, I believe.

LADY REMENHAM [*triumphantly*]. There, you see! That's what comes of *doing* things!

MRS. CASSILIS [*slight shrug. Pouring herself out more tea, and still quite unruffled*]. Well, I'm afraid there's no use in discussing it. They're engaged, and Miss Borridge is coming down here.

MRS. HERRIES. Coming here!

LADY REMENHAM. Coming here!!!

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. On a visit. With her mother.

LADY REMENHAM [*putting down her cup with a touch of solemnity*]. Adelaide, are you — excuse my asking the question — are you *quite* in your right mind?

MRS. CASSILIS [*laughing*]. I believe so.

LADY REMENHAM. You've noticed nothing? No dizziness about the head? No singing in the ears? [MRS. CASSILIS *shakes her head*] And yet you ask this young woman to stay with you! *And* her mother! Neither of whom you know anything whatever about!

MRS. CASSILIS. Another cup?

[LADY REMENHAM *shakes her head irritably*]

LADY REMENHAM. Is *Mr.* Borridge — Ugh! — coming too?

MRS. CASSILIS. He is dead, I believe.

LADY REMENHAM. That, at least, is satisfactory.

MABEL. Mamma!

LADY REMENHAM. Mabel, I shall do my duty whatever happens. [*Turning to* MRS. CASSILIS *again*] And does Mrs. Borridge carry on the business? I think you said he was a *boot*-maker?

MABEL. *Book*-maker.

MRS. CASSILIS [*refusing to take offence*]. No. I believe he left her some small annuity.

LADY REMENHAM. Annuity? Ah, dies with her, of course?

MRS. CASSILIS. No doubt.

LADY REMENHAM [*gasps*]. Well, Adelaide, I never should have believed it of you. To ask these people to the house!

MRS. CASSILIS. Why shouldn't I ask them? Geoffrey tells me Ethel is charming.

LADY REMENHAM. Ethel?

MRS. CASSILIS. Miss Borridge.

LADY REMENHAM. Bah!

[*Enter* BUTLER, *showing in another visitor. This is* LADY MARCHMONT, MRS. CASSILIS'S *sister. She is a woman of about five-and-forty. She wears a light travelling cloak. She is not unlike* MRS. CASSILIS *in appearance and manner, but is of a more delicate, fragile type*]

BUTLER. Lady Marchmont.

MRS. CASSILIS [*rising*]. Ah, Margaret. How glad I am to see you. Some more tea, Watson.

LADY MARCHMONT [*kisses her*]. Not for me, please. No, really. My doctor won't *hear* of it. Hot water with a little milk is the most he allows me. How do you do, dear? [*Shaking hands with the others*] How do you do? How do you do?

[BUTLER *goes out*]

MRS. CASSILIS. How's the General?

LADY MARCHMONT. Very gouty. His temper this morning was atrocious, poor man.

LADY REMENHAM [*shakes her head*]. You bear it like a saint, dear.

LADY MARCHMONT [*philosophically, sitting in arm-chair after laying aside her cloak*]. Yes — I go away a good deal. He finds my absence very soothing. That's why I was so glad to accept Adelaide's invitation when she asked me.

MRS. CASSILIS. My dear, you'll be invaluable. I look to you to help me with my visitors.

LADY REMENHAM. Poor Margaret. But you always were so unselfish.

LADY MARCHMONT. Are they *very* —— ?

LADY REMENHAM. *Very.*

MRS. CASSILIS [*laughing*]. My dear, Lady Remenham knows nothing whatever about them.

LADY REMENHAM [*firmly*]. I know everything about them. The girl has no money. She has no position. She became engaged to Geoffrey without your knowledge. She has a perfectly dreadful mother. And her name is Borridge.

LADY MARCHMONT [*raising her brows*]. When are they coming?

MRS. CASSILIS. I expect them in half an hour. The carriage was to go straight back to the station to meet them.

LADY REMENHAM [*ruffling her feathers angrily*]. I hope Geoffrey is conscious of the folly and wickedness of his conduct.

LADY MARCHMONT. Where is he, dear?

MRS. CASSILIS. He's down here with me — and as happy as possible, I'm glad to say.

LADY REMENHAM. Extraordinary! But the young men of the present day *are* extraordinary. Young men nowadays seem always to be either irreclaimably vicious or deplorably silly. I prefer them vicious. They give less trouble. My poor brother Algernon — you remember Algernon, don't you, Rector? He was another of your pupils.

RECTOR [*sighs*]. Yes, I remember.

MRS. HERRIES. Major Warrington hasn't been down for quite a long time, has he?

LADY REMENHAM. No. We don't ask him to Milverton now. He comes to us in London, but in the country one has to be more particular. He really is dreadfully dissipated. Always running after some petticoat or other. Often more than one. But there is safety in numbers, don't you think?

RECTOR. Unquestionably.

LADY REMENHAM. Algernon always says he is by temperament a polygamist. I don't know what he means. However, I've no anxiety about *him*. *He never* gets engaged. He's far too *clever* for that. I wonder if he could help you out of this dreadful entanglement? In a case of this kind one should have the very best advice.

MRS. CASSILIS [*laughing*]. I shall be delighted to see Major Warrington — though not for the reason you suggest.

LADY REMENHAM. Well, I'll ask him down. Remenham won't like it. He disapproves of him so much. He gets quite virtuous about it. But that sort of moral indignation should never be allowed to get out of hand, should it? [RECTOR *nods*] Besides, he's away just now. I'll write to Algernon directly I get back, and I'll bring him over to dinner one day next week. Say Thursday?

LADY MARCHMONT. Do, dear. I adore Major Warrington.

LADY REMENHAM. I dare say. [*Preparing to go*] He's not *your* brother. Meantime, I can ask him whether he knows anything against Mrs. Borridge. But he's sure to. He knows nearly all the detrimental people in London, especially if their daughters are in the least attractive.

MRS. CASSILIS [*smiling*]. You'll come *with* him on Thursday, won't you? And Mabel? [MABEL *rises*]

LADY REMENHAM. Perhaps that will be best. Then I can keep my brother within bounds. Poor Algernon is apt to take too much champagne unless I am there to prevent him. And now, dear, I really must go. [*She and* MABEL *go up towards door*] Good-bye.

MRS. CASSILIS. You won't stay to meet Mrs. Borridge?

LADY REMENHAM [*shudders*]. I think not. Thursday will be *quite* soon enough. Good-bye, Mrs. Herries. [*As they reach door* GEOFFREY *opens it, and almost runs into her arms*] Ah, *here* is the young man who is causing us all this distress.

GEOFFREY. I, Lady Remenham?

[*Shakes hands*] How do you do, Aunt Margaret? [*Shakes hands with others*]

Lady Remenham [*shakes hands*]. You. What do you *mean* by getting engaged to some one we none of us know anything about?

Mabel. Mamma!

Lady Remenham. I consider your conduct perfectly heartless. Its foolishness needs no comment from me.

Geoffrey. Really, Lady Remenham ——

Lady Remenham. Tut, tut, sir. Don't "really" me. I'm ashamed of you. And now I'll be off before I quarrel with you. Come, Mabel.

[*Sweeps out, followed by* Mabel. Geoffrey *opens door for them, and then takes them down to their carriage*]

Mrs. Herries. I think we ought to be going, too. Come, Hildebrand.

[*Shakes hands*]

[Mrs. Cassilis *rings*]

Rector. Good-bye, Mrs. Cassilis. Let's hope everything will turn out for the best.

Mrs. Herries. It never does. Good-bye.

Mrs. Cassilis [*going towards door with* Rector]. Good-bye. [*Shakes hands warmly*] And you'll both come and dine on Thursday, won't you? To-morrow week that is. Major Warrington will want to see his old tutor.

Rector. You're very good.

[*He and* Mrs. Herries *go out*]

Mrs. Cassilis [*returning to her sister*]. Dear Lady Remenham! What nonsense she talks.

Lady Marchmont. People who talk as much as that must talk a good deal of nonsense, mustn't they? Otherwise they have nothing to say.

[*Re-enter* Geoffrey]

Geoffrey. Lady Remenham seems ruffled.

Lady Marchmont. About your engagement? I'm not surprised.

Geoffrey. I don't see what it's got to do with her.

Lady Marchmont. You must make allowance for a mother's feelings, my dear Geoffrey.

Geoffrey [*pats* Mrs. Cassilis's *hand, then goes to tea-table and helps himself to tea*]. Lady Remenham isn't my mother. She's my god-mother.

Lady Marchmont. She's Mabel's mother.

Mrs. Cassilis. Sh! Margaret.

Lady Marchmont. My dear, there's no use making mysteries about things. Geoffrey was always supposed to be going to marry Mabel ever since they were children. He knows that.

Geoffrey. That was only boy and girl talk.

Lady Marchmont. For you, perhaps.

Geoffrey. And for her. Mabel never expected ——

[*Pause. He thinks*]

Lady Marchmont. Did you ever ask her?

Geoffrey. But I never supposed ——

Lady Marchmont. I think you *should* have supposed. A boy should be very careful how he encourages a girl to think of him in that way.

Geoffrey. But I'd no idea. Of course, I *like* Mabel. I like her awfully. We're like brother and sister. But beyond that — [*Pause*] Mother, do *you* think I've behaved badly to Mabel?

Mrs. Cassilis [*gently*]. I think perhaps you've a little disappointed her.

Geoffrey [*peevishly*]. Why didn't somebody *tell* me? How was I to know?

Lady Marchmont. My dear boy, we couldn't be expected to know you were absolutely blind.

Mrs. Cassilis. Margaret, you're not to scold Geoffrey. I won't allow it.

Geoffrey. Mother, dear — you won't allow this to make any difference? With Ethel, I mean?

Mrs. Cassilis. Of course not, Geoff.

[*Lays hand on his*]

Geoffrey [*earnestly*]. She's so fond of me. And I'm so fond of her. We were made for each other. I couldn't bear it if you were unkind to her.

Mrs. Cassilis. My dear Geoff, I'm sure Ethel is everything that is sweet and good, or my boy wouldn't love her. And I intend to fall in love with her myself directly I set eyes on her.

Geoffrey. Dear mother! [*Pats her hand affectionately. Pause; then, thoughtfully*] I'm afraid you'll find *her* mother rather trying — at first. She's not quite a lady, you know. . . . But she's very good-natured.

Mrs. Cassilis [*cheerfully*]. Well, well, we shall see. And now run away, dear, and leave me to talk to Margaret, and I'll undertake that all symptoms of

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crossness shall have disappeared before our visitors arrive.

GEOFFREY. All right, mother.

[*Kisses her and goes out*]

LADY MARCHMONT [*looking after him reflectively*]. How you spoil that boy!

MRS. CASSILIS [*lightly*]. What else should I do with him? He's my only one. Mothers always spoil their sons, don't they? And quarrel with their daughters. More marriages are due to girls being unhappy at home than most people imagine.

LADY MARCHMONT. And yet Geoffrey wants to leave you, apparently.

MRS. CASSILIS [*smiling bravely; but her eyes have a suspicion of moisture in them*]. Evidently I didn't spoil him enough.

LADY MARCHMONT [*washing her hands of the whole affair*]. Well, I'm glad you're pleased with this engagement.

MRS. CASSILIS [*sudden change of manner. Her face loses its brightness, and she suddenly seems to look older*]. *Pleased* with it! Do you really believe that?

LADY MARCHMONT. Didn't you say so?

MRS. CASSILIS [*shrugs*]. To Lady Remenham and Mrs. Herries. Yes.

LADY MARCHMONT. And to Geoffrey.

MRS. CASSILIS. And Geoffrey too. [*Half to herself*] Mothers can't always be straightforward with their sons, can they?

LADY MARCHMONT. Why not?

[*There is a pause while* MRS. CASSILIS *makes up her mind whether to answer this or not. Then she seems to decide to speak out. She moves nearer to her sister, and when she begins her voice is very firm and matter-of-fact*]

MRS. CASSILIS. My dear Margaret, what would *you* do if your son suddenly wrote to you that he had become engaged to a girl you knew nothing whatever about, a girl far beneath him in social rank?

LADY MARCHMONT [*firmly*]. I should have forbidden the engagement. Forbidden it absolutely.

MRS. CASSILIS. Without seeing the girl?

LADY MARCHMONT. Certainly. The mere fact of her accepting my son before I had ever set eyes on her would have been quite enough.

MRS. CASSILIS. But supposing your son were of age and independent?

LADY MARCHMONT [*impatiently*]. Geoffrey isn't independent.

MRS. CASSILIS. He has five hundred a year.

LADY MARCHMONT [*contemptuously*]. What's *that?*

MRS. CASSILIS. Besides, Geoffrey knows I should always be willing to help him.

LADY MARCHMONT. That's just it. He ought *not* to have known. You ought to have made it clear to him from the first that if he married without your consent he would never have a penny from you, either now or at your death. Deynham isn't entailed, fortunately.

MRS. CASSILIS. But, my dear, I couldn't *disinherit* Geoffrey! How could I?

LADY MARCHMONT [*shrugs*]. You could have threatened to. And then the girl wouldn't have accepted him.

MRS. CASSILIS. I don't know. [*Thoughtfully*] Five hundred a year may seem a considerable sum to her.

LADY MARCHMONT [*horrified*]. Is it as bad as that?

MRS. CASSILIS [*trying to smile*]. Besides, she may be really in love with him.

LADY MARCHMONT [*snappish*]. What *has* that to do with it?

MRS. CASSILIS. Young people. In love. They are seldom prudent, are they?

LADY MARCHMONT. Still, I should have forbidden the engagement.

MRS. CASSILIS. And then?

LADY MARCHMONT. What do you mean?

MRS. CASSILIS. If Geoffrey had defied me? Boys can be very obstinate.

LADY MARCHMONT. I should have refused ever to see him again.

MRS. CASSILIS. Ah, Margaret, I couldn't do that. Geoffrey is everything I have. He is my only son, my joy and my pride. I couldn't quarrel with him whatever happened. [LADY MARCHMONT *leans back with gesture of impatience*] No, Margaret, my plan was the best.

LADY MARCHMONT. What *is* your plan?

MRS. CASSILIS [*quite practical*]. My plan is to give the thing a fair trial. Ask her down here. Ask her mother down here. And see what happens.

LADY MARCHMONT [*looking at her narrowly*]. Nothing else?

MRS. CASSILIS. Nothing else — at present.

LADY MARCHMONT. You could have done that without sanctioning the engagement.

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. But love thrives on opposition. There's a fascination about a runaway match. It has romance. Whereas there's no romance at all about an ordinary wedding. It's only dull and rather vulgar. [*Wearily*] And, after all, the girl *may* be presentable.

LADY MARCHMONT. Borridge! [*Crisply*] I'm not very sanguine about *that*.

MRS. CASSILIS. Anyhow, she's pretty, and Geoffrey loves her. That's all we know about her at present.

LADY MARCHMONT. Wretched boy. To think he should have allowed himself to be caught in this way! . . . Don't you think you might have asked the daughter *without* the mother?

MRS. CASSILIS. So Geoffrey suggested. He seemed rather nervous about having her here. She's rather a terrible person, I gather. But I said as we were marrying into the family we mustn't be unkind to her. [*With a slow smile*] Poor boy, he rather blenched at that. I think he hadn't associated *Mrs.* Borridge with his matrimonial schemes. It's just as well he should do so at once, don't you think?

BUTLER. Mrs. and Miss Borridge.

[*Enter* MRS. BORRIDGE *and* ETHEL. *Both rise.* LADY MARCHMONT *turns sharp round to look at the newcomers.* MRS. CASSILIS *goes up to meet them with her sweetest smile. Nothing could be more hospitable than her manner or more gracious than her welcome. The change from the* MRS. CASSILIS *of a moment before, with the resolute set of the lips and the glitter in the eyes, to this gentle, caressing creature does the greatest credit to her powers of self-control.* LADY MARCHMONT *notices it, and is a little shocked*]

MRS. CASSILIS. *How* do you do? *How* do you do, my dear? [*Kisses* ETHEL] Tell Mr. Geoffrey, Watson. I hope you've not had a tiring journey, Mrs. Borridge? [*Exit* BUTLER]

MRS. BORRIDGE. Not at all, Mrs. Cassilis. We 'ad — had — the compartment to ourselves, bein' first-class. As I says to my girlie, "They'll very likely send the carriage to meet us, and it looks better for the servants."

[MRS. BORRIDGE *comes down stage. She is a large, gross woman, rather over-dressed in inexpensive materials. Too much colour in her hat and far too much in her cheeks. But a beaming, good-natured harridan for all that. As a landlady you would rather like her. She smiles nervously in* LADY MARCHMONT'S *direction, not sure whether she ought to say anything or wait to be introduced. Her daughter keeps by her side, watching to see she doesn't commit herself, and quite sure that she will.* ETHEL *is pretty but second-rate; she has had the sense to dress simply, and therefore is less appallingly out of the picture than her far more amiable mother*]

MRS. CASSILIS. Let me introduce you. Mrs. Borridge — Lady Marchmont, Miss Borridge.

[LADY MARCHMONT *bows*]

MRS. BORRIDGE [*extends gloved hand*]. How do you do, Lady Marchmont? Proud, I'm sure.

[LADY MARCHMONT *finds nothing to say, and for the moment there is a constrained pause. Then enter* GEOFFREY *hurriedly*]

GEOFFREY [*with as much heartiness as he can muster, but it rings a little hollow*]. How do you do, Mrs. Borridge? Ethel, dear, how long have you been here? I didn't hear you come. [*Kisses her*]

ETHEL. We've only just got here.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*subsiding into an arm-chair*]. Don't apologise, Geoffy. Your ma's been entertaining us most kind.

GEOFFREY [*with look of gratitude to* MRS. CASSILIS]. Dear mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Well, how *are* you, Geoffy? You *look* first-rate.

GEOFFREY. Oh, I'm all right.

MRS. BORRIDGE. And what a fine 'ouse — house — you've got! Quite a palace, I declare!

GEOFFREY. I'm glad you like it.

MRS. BORRIDGE. And it'll all be yours some day. Won't it?

ETHEL [*pulls her sleeve*]. Mother!

GEOFFREY. That's as my mother decides.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Then you're sure to 'ave it. I know what mothers are! And what a 'andsome room, too. Quite like the Metropole at Brighton.

[*Enter* MRS. CASSILIS's *maid. She is in a perfectly plain black dress, and looks enormously more like a lady than* ETHEL]

MAID. Can I have your keys, madam?

MRS. BORRIDGE [*surprised*]. My keys?

MAID. The keys of your trunks, madam.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Certainly not. Who ever 'eard of such a thing?

MAID. I thought you might wish me to unpack for you, madam.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*bristling*]. Oh. *Did* you! I don't want no strange girls ferreting in *my* boxes. [ETHEL *nudges her arm*] What *is* it, Eth? Oh, very well. But I'm not going to let her, all the same. No, thank you.

MRS. CASSILIS [*quite self-possessed.* LADY MARCHMONT *nervously avoids her eye*]. Mrs. Borridge will unpack for herself, Dorset. [MAID *bows, and turns to go out*] Wait a moment. [MAID *pauses at door*] Would you like to take off your things at once, Mrs. Borridge? If so, Dorset shall show you your room. And I'll have some tea sent up to you there. You'll want it after your journey. [*Feels teapot*] This is quite cold. What do you say, Ethel?

ETHEL. Thank you, Mrs. Cassilis. A cup of tea would be very nice.

MRS. CASSILIS. Show Mrs. Borridge her room, Dorset. [MRS. BORRIDGE *rises*] And take her up some tea. Dinner will be at eight. You'll ring if there's anything you want, won't you?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Thank you, Mrs. Cassilis.

[MRS. BORRIDGE *waddles out, beaming. She feels that her first introduction to the houses of the great has gone off successfully.* GEOFFREY *holds the door open for them, and gives* ETHEL *a sly kiss in passing.* MRS. CASSILIS *makes no sign, but one can feel her shudder at the sound.* GEOFFREY *comes down to her a moment later, brimming with enthusiasm*]

GEOFFREY. Well, mother, *what* do you think of her? Isn't she *sweet?*

MRS. CASSILIS [*gently*]. She's very pretty, Geoff. [*Lays hand on his*]

GEOFFREY. And *good!* You don't know how *good* she is!

MRS. CASSILIS. So long as she's good to my boy that's all I ask.

GEOFFREY. Dearest mother. [*Kisses her demonstratively*] Now I'll go and dress.

[*Goes out quickly, with a boyish feeling that he has been rather too demonstrative for a true-born Englishman. There is a long pause, during which* LADY MARCHMONT *looks at her sister,* MRS. CASSILIS *at nothing. The latter is evidently in deep thought, and seems to have almost forgotten her sister's presence. At last* LADY MARCHMONT *speaks with the stern accent of "I told you so"*]

LADY MARCHMONT. And *that*'s the girl your son is to marry.

MRS. CASSILIS. Marry her! Nonsense, my dear Margaret.

[*The curtain falls*]

ACT II

SCENE. — *The lawn at Deynham. Time, after breakfast the following morning. Under a tree stand two or three long wicker chairs, with bright red cushions. On the right stands the house, with windows open on to the terrace. A path on the left leads to the flower garden, and another on the same side to the strawberry beds. When the curtain rises,* MRS. CASSILIS *comes on to the terrace, followed by* ETHEL, *and a little later by* MRS. BORRIDGE. *The last-named is flushed with food, and gorgeously arrayed in a green silk blouse. She is obviously in the best of spirits, and is generally terribly at ease in Zion.*

MRS. CASSILIS. Shall we come out on the lawn? It's such a perfect morning.

ETHEL. That *will* be jolly, Mrs. Cassilis. [*They come down*] When I'm in the country I shall always eat too much breakfast and then spend the morning on a long chair digesting it. So will mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. How you go on, dearie!

MRS. CASSILIS. Try this chair, then. [*Slightly moving long chair forward*] Mrs. Borridge, what kind of chair do *you* like?

MRS. BORRIDGE. This'll do. I'm not particular. [*Subsides into another long chair*] Am I showing my ankles, Eth?

ETHEL. Sh! mother! [*Giggles*]

MRS. BORRIDGE. Well, I only asked, dearie.

MRS. CASSILIS. I wonder if you'd like a cushion for your head? Try this.

[*Puts vivid red cushion behind* MRS. BORRIDGE'S *vivid green blouse. The effect is electrifying*]

MRS. BORRIDGE. That's better.

[MRS. CASSILIS *sinks negligently in wicker chair and puts up white lace parasol*]

ETHEL [*sigh of content*]. I call this Heaven, Mrs. Cassilis.

MRS. CASSILIS. That's right, my dear. Are you fond of the country?

ETHEL. I don't know. I've never been there so far. Not to the real country, I mean. Mums and I have a week at Brighton now and then. And once we went for a month to Broadstairs after I had the measles. But that's not exactly country, is it?

MRS. CASSILIS. You're sure to like it. Geoffrey loves it. He's never so happy as when he's pottering about Deynham with his gun.

ETHEL. Doesn't he get tired of that?

MRS. CASSILIS. Oh no. Besides, he doesn't do that all the year round. He rides a great deal. We've very good hunting at Deynham. Are you fond of horses?

ETHEL. I can't bear them, Mrs. Cassilis.

MRS. BORRIDGE. When she was a little tot her father put 'er — her — on a pony and she fell off. It didn't hurt 'er, but the doctor said 'er nerve was shook. And now she can't bear 'orses.

MRS. CASSILIS. What a pity! I do hope you won't be dull while you're with us. Perhaps you're fond of walking?

ETHEL. Yes. I don't mind walking — for a little. If there's anything to walk *to*.

MRS. CASSILIS. We often walk up Milverton Hill on fine afternoons to see the view. It's the highest point about here.

ETHEL [*stifling a yawn*]. Is it, Mrs. Cassilis?

MRS. CASSILIS. And no doubt we shall find other things to amuse you. What *do* you like?

ETHEL. Oh, shops and theatres, and lunching at restaurants and dancing, and, oh, lots of things.

MRS. CASSILIS. I'm afraid we've no shops nearer than Leicester, and that's twelve miles away. And we've no restaurants at all. But I dare say we could get up a dance for you.

ETHEL [*clapping her hands*]. That'll be *sweet!* I simply *love* dancing. And all the rest of the time I shall sit on the lawn and grow fat, like mummy. [*Protest from* MRS. BORRIDGE] Oh yes, I shall.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Ethel, don't be saucy.

ETHEL [*laughing*]. Mummy, if you scold me you'll have to go in. It's far too hot to be scolded.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Isn't she a spoilt girl, Mrs. Cassilis? What they taught you at that boarding school, miss, *I* don't know. Not manners, *I* can see.

ETHEL [*ruffling her mother's wig*]. There! there! mums. Was 'em's cross?

MRS. BORRIDGE [*pettishly*]. Stop it, Ethel, stop it, I say. Whatever will Mrs. Cassilis think of you!

MRS. CASSILIS [*smiling sweetly*]. Don't scold her, Mrs. Borridge. It's so pleasant to see a little high spirits, isn't it?

MRS. BORRIDGE [*beaming*]. Well, if *you* don't mind, Mrs. Cassilis, *I* don't. But it's not the way girls were taught to behave in *my* young days.

ETHEL [*slight yawn*]. That was so long ago, mums!

MRS. CASSILIS [*rising*]. Well, I must go and see after my housekeeping. Can you entertain each other while I'm away for a little? My sister will be down soon, I hope. She had breakfast in her room. And Geoffrey will be back in half an hour. I asked him to ride over to Milverton for me with a note.

ETHEL. We shall be all right, Mrs. Cassilis. Mother'll go to sleep. She always does if you make her too comfortable. And then she'll snore, won't you, mums?

[MRS. CASSILIS *goes into the house, smiling bravely to the last*]

Mrs. Borridge [*alarmed*]. Ethel, you shouldn't talk like that before Mrs. Cassilis. She won't like it.

Ethel. Oh yes, she will. And I'm going to make her like *me* awfully. What lovely clothes she has! I wish *you* had lovely clothes, mums.

Mrs. Borridge. What's the matter with my clothes, dearie? I 'ad on my best silk last night. And I bought this blouse special in the Grove only a week ago so as to do you credit.

Ethel. I know. Still . . . Couldn't you have chosen something *quieter?*

Mrs. Borridge. Oh no, dearie. I 'ate quiet things.

Ethel. *H*ate, mother.

Mrs. Borridge. *H*ate, then. Give me something *cheerful.*

Ethel [*hopelessly*]. Very well, mummy.

Mrs. Borridge [*imploring*]. But *do* be careful what you say before Mrs. Cassilis. She's not used to girls being so free.

Ethel. Oh yes, she is, mums. All girls are like that nowadays. All girls that are ladies, I mean. They bet, and talk slang, and smoke cigarettes, and play bridge. I know all about that. I've read about it in "The Ladies' Mail." One of them put ice down her young man's back at dinner, and when he broke off his engagement she only laughed.

Mrs. Borridge [*lamentably*]. Oh dear, I do hope there won't be ice for dinner to-night.

Ethel [*laughing*]. Poor mums, don't be anxious. I'll be *very* careful, I promise you.

Mrs. Borridge [*complaining*]. You're so 'eadstrong. And I *do* want to see you married and respectable. I wasn't always respectable myself, and I know what it means for a girl. Your sister Nan, she's gay, she is. She 'adn't no ambition. An' look what she is now!

Ethel [*looking round nervously*]. If Geoff were to hear of it!

Mrs. Borridge. 'E won't. Not 'e! I've seen to that.

Ethel. These things always get known somehow.

Mrs. Borridge. Nan's changed 'er name. Calls 'erself Mrs. Seymour. An' she never comes to see us now. If she did, I'd show 'er the door fast enough. Disgracin' us like that!

Ethel. Poor Nan!

Mrs. Borridge [*warmly*]. Don't you pity 'er. She don't deserve it. She treated us like dirt. She's a bad 'un all through. I've done things myself as I didn't ought to 'ave done. But I've always *wanted* to be respectable. But it's not so easy when you've your living to make and no one to look to. [Ethel *nods*] Yes, I've 'ad my bad times, dearie. But I've pulled through them. And I *made* your father marry me. No one can deny that. It wasn't easy. An' I had to give him all my savings before 'e'd say "Yes." And even then I wasn't 'appy till we'd been to church. But 'e did marry me in the end. An' then *you* was born, an' I says my girl shall be brought up respectable. She shall be a lady. And some day, when she's married an' ridin' in her carriage, she'll say, "It's all my mother's doing."

[*Wipes her eyes in pensive melancholy*]

Ethel. How long *were* you married to father, mums?

Mrs. Borridge. Only eight years, dearie. Before that I was 'is 'ouse-keeper.

Ethel. *His*, mummy.

Mrs. Borridge. Very well, dearie. [*With quiet satisfaction*] Father drank 'isself to death the year Bend Or won the Derby. [*Shaking her head*] He lost a pot o' money over that, and it preyed on 'is mind. So he took to the drink. If he 'adn't insured 'is life an' kep' the premiums paid we should 'ave been in the 'ouse, that's where we should 'ave been, dearie.

Ethel. Poor dad!

Mrs. Borridge. Yes. 'E 'ad 'is faults. But 'e was a kind-'earted man, was Joe Borridge. 'E died much respected. [*Cheering up*] An' now you're engaged to a *real* gentleman! *That's* the sort for my Eth!

Ethel. Oh! sh! mums.

[*Looking round nervously*]

Mrs. Borridge. No one'll hear. And if they do, what's the harm? You've got 'is promise.

Ethel. *H*is, mother.

Mrs. Borridge. You can hold 'im — him — to it.

Ethel [*nodding*]. Yes. Besides, Geoff's awfully in love with me. And I really rather like *him*, you know — in a way.

Mrs. Borridge. *I* know, dearie. Still, I'd get something from 'im on paper if I was you, something that'll

'old 'im. The men takes a bit of 'olding nowadays. They're that slippy! You get something that'll 'old 'em. That's what I always say to girls. Letters is best. Oh, the chances I've seen missed through not gettin' something on paper!

ETHEL [*confidently*]. You needn't worry, mummy. Geoff's all right.

MRS. BORRIDGE. I dare say. Still, I'd like something the lawyers can take hold of. Geoffy may get tired of *you*, dearie. Men are that changeable. *I* know them!

ETHEL [*viciously*]. He'd better not! I'd make him *pay* for it!

MRS. BORRIDGE. So you could, dearie, if you 'ad somethin' on paper. [ETHEL *shrugs impatiently*] Well, if you won't, you won't. But if anythin' happens don't say I didn't warn you, that's all. I wish Geoffy was a lord, like Lord Buckfastleigh.

ETHEL. *I* don't.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Well, not *just* like Buckfastleigh, per'aps. But still, a lord. You never did like Buckfastleigh.

ETHEL. That old beast!

MRS. BORRIDGE [*remonstrating*]. He's been a good friend to us, dearie. And he is an earl, whatever you may say.

ETHEL. Pah!

MRS. BORRIDGE. And he's rich. Richer than Geoffy. And he's awfully sweet on you, dearie. I believe he'd 'ave married you if 'is old woman 'ad turned up 'er toes last autumn. And he's seventy-three. He wouldn't 'ave lasted long.

ETHEL [*fiercely*]. I wouldn't marry him if he were twice as rich — and twice as old.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*placidly*]. I dare say you're right, dearie. He's a queer 'un is Buckfastleigh. But he offered to settle five thousand down if you'd go to Paris with 'im. Five thousand down on the nail. He wasn't what you'd call sober when he said it, but he meant it. I dare say he'd 'ave made it seven if you hadn't boxed 'is ears. [ETHEL *laughs*] Wasn't I savage when you did that, dearie! But you was right as it turned out. For Geoffy proposed next day. And now you'll be a real married woman There's nothing like being married. It's so respectable. When you're married you can look down on people. And that's what every woman wants. That's why I pinched and screwed and sent you to boarding school. I said my girlie shall be a real lady. And she is.

[*Much moved at the reflection*]

ETHEL. Is she, mums?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Of course, dearie. That's why she's 'ere. Deynham Abbey, *two* footmen in livery, fire in 'er bedroom, evenin' dress every night of 'er life. *Lady* Marchmont invited to meet her! Everythin' tip top! And it's not a bit too good for my girl. It's what she was made for.

ETHEL [*thoughtfully*]. I wish Johnny Travers had had some money. Then I could have married him.

MRS. BORRIDGE. *Married* 'im — him! Married a auctioneer's clerk without twopence to bless 'isself. I should think not indeed! Not likely!

ETHEL. Still, I was awfully gone on Johnny.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*decidedly*]. Nonsense, Eth. I should 'ope we can look 'igher than *that!*

ETHEL. Sh! mother. Here's Geoff.

[GEOFFREY, *in riding breeches, comes out of the house*]

GEOFFREY. Good morning, dear. [*Kisses* ETHEL] I thought I should be back earlier, but I rode over to Milverton for the mater [*To* MRS. BORRIDGE] Good morning.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*archly*]. You 'aven't no kisses to spare for *me*, 'ave you, Geoffy? Never mind. You keep 'em all for my girl. She's worth 'em.

GEOFFREY [*caressing her hand*]. Dear Ethel.

MRS. BORRIDGE. How well you look in those riding togs, Geoffrey! Don't 'e, Eth?

[*Endeavouring to hoist herself out of her chair*]

ETHEL [*smiling at him*]. Geoff always looks well in everything.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Well, I'll go indoors and leave you two to spoon. That's what you want, *I* know. I'll go and talk to your ma.

[*Waddles off into the house, beaming*]

GEOFFREY [*picking rose and bringing it to* ETHEL]. A rose for the prettiest girl in England.

ETHEL. Oh, Geoff, do you think so?

GEOFFREY. Of course. The prettiest and the best. [*Takes her hand*]

ETHEL. You do really love me, Geoff, don't you?

GEOFFREY. Do you doubt it? [*Kisses her*]

ETHEL. No; you're much too good to me, you know.

GEOFFREY. Nonsense, darling.

ETHEL. It's the truth. You're a gentleman and rich, and have fine friends. While mother and I are common as common.

GEOFFREY [*firmly*]. You're *not*.

ETHEL. Oh yes, we are. Of course, I've been to school, and been taught things. But what's education? It can't alter how we're made, can it? And she and I are the same underneath.

GEOFFREY. Ethel, you're not to say such things, or to think them.

ETHEL. But they're true, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. They're *not*. [*Kisses her*] Say they're not.

ETHEL [*shakes her head*]. No.

GEOFFREY. Say they're *not*. [*Kisses her*] *Not!*

ETHEL. Very well. They're not.

GEOFFREY. That's right. [*Kiss*] There's a reward.

ETHEL [*pulling herself away*]. I wonder if I did right to say "Yes" when you asked me, Geoff? Right for *you*, I mean.

GEOFFREY. Of course you did, darling. You love me, don't you?

ETHEL. But wouldn't it have been best for you if I'd said "No"? Then you'd have married Lady Somebody or other, with lots and lots of money, and lived happy ever afterwards.

GEOFFREY [*indignantly*]. I shouldn't.

ETHEL. Oh yes, you would.

GEOFFREY. And what would *you* have done, pray?

ETHEL. Oh, I should have taken up with some one else, or perhaps married old Buckfastleigh when his wife died.

GEOFFREY. Ethel!

ETHEL. I should. I'm not the sort to go on moping for long. I should have been awfully down for a bit, and missed you every day. But by-and-by I should have cheered up and married some one else. I could have done it. I could!

GEOFFREY. And what about *me?*

ETHEL. Wouldn't you have been happier in the end, dear? I'm not the sort of wife you ought to have married. Some day I expect you'll come to hate me. [*Sighs*] Heigho.

GEOFFREY [*softly*]. You know I sha'n't, dear.

ETHEL. But I did so want to marry a gentleman. Mother wanted it too. [*Quite simply*] So I said "Yes," you see.

GEOFFREY [*drawing her to him*]. Darling! [*Kisses her tenderly*]

ETHEL. Geoff, what did *your* mother say when you told her we were engaged? Was she dreadfully down about it?

GEOFFREY. No.

ETHEL. On your honour?

GEOFFREY. On my honour. Mother never said a single word to me against it. Lady Marchmont scolded me a bit. She's my aunt, you see.

ETHEL. Old cat!

GEOFFREY. And so did Lady Remenham. She's my godmother. But mother stood up for us all through.

ETHEL [*sighs*]. I shall never get on with all your fine friends, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. You will. Any one who's as pretty as my Ethel can get on anywhere.

ETHEL. Yes, I *am* pretty, aren't I? I'm glad of that. It makes a difference, doesn't it?

GEOFFREY. Of course. In a week you'll have them all running after you.

ETHEL [*clapping her hands*]. Shall I, Geoff? Won't that be splendid! [*Kisses him*] Oh, Geoff, I'm so happy. When shall we be married?

GEOFFREY. I'm afraid not till next year, dear. Next June, mother says.

ETHEL [*pouting*]. That's a *long* way off, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Yes, but mother says you're to be here a *great* deal between now and then, almost all the time, in fact. So it won't be so bad, will it?

ETHEL. Why does your mother want it put off till then?

GEOFFREY. Something about the London season, she said. We shall be married in London, of course, because your mother's house is there.

ETHEL. Oh yes, of course.

GEOFFREY. And besides, mother says she never believes in very short engagements. She says girls sometimes don't quite know their own minds. I said I was sure *you* weren't like that. But she asked me to promise, so I did.

ETHEL. Well, that's settled then. [*Jumping up*] And won't it be nice to be *married?* Really *married!* . . . And now I want to *do* something. I'm tired of sitting still. What shall it be?

GEOFFREY [*with brilliant originality*]. We might go for a walk up Milverton Hill. The view there's awfully fine.

[*Looks at watch*] But there's hardly time before lunch.

ETHEL. Besides, I should spoil my shoes.

[*Puts out foot, the shoe of which is manifestly not intended for country walking*]

GEOFFREY. Suppose we go to the strawberry bed and eat strawberries?

ETHEL. Oh yes, that'll be splendid. I can be so deliciously greedy over strawberries.

[*Puts her arm in his, and he leads her off to the strawberry beds. As they go off,* MRS. CASSILIS, LADY MARCHMONT, *and* MRS. BORRIDGE *come down from terrace*]

MRS. CASSILIS. Going for a stroll, dears?

GEOFFREY. Only as far as the strawberry bed, mother dear.

MRS. CASSILIS. Oughtn't dear Ethel to have a hat? The sun is very hot there.

ETHEL. I've got a parasol, Mrs. Cassilis.

[*They disappear down the path*]

MRS. BORRIDGE [*rallying her*]. You weren't down to breakfast, Lady Marchmont.

LADY MARCHMONT. No, I — had a headache.

MRS. CASSILIS. Poor Margaret.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*sympathetically*]. It's 'eadachy weather, isn't it?

[*Subsiding into a chair.* MRS. BORRIDGE *makes it a rule of life never to stand when she can sit*]

LADY MARCHMONT. I suppose it is.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Or perhaps it was the oyster patties last night? I've often noticed after an oyster I come over quite queer. Specially if it isn't *quite* fresh.

LADY MARCHMONT. Indeed!

MRS. BORRIDGE. Yes. But crabs is worse. Crabs is simply poison to me.

LADY MARCHMONT [*faintly*]. How extraordinary.

MRS. BORRIDGE. They are, I do assure you If I touch a crab I'm that ill nobody would believe it.

MRS. CASSILIS. Well, Margaret, I expect you oughtn't to be talked to or it will make your head worse. You stay here quietly and rest while I take Mrs Borridge for a stroll in the garden.

LADY MARCHMONT. Thank you. [*Closing her eyes*] My head is a little bad still.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*confidentially*]. Try a drop of brandy, Lady Marchmont. My 'usband always said there's nothing like brandy if you're feeling poorly.

LADY MARCHMONT. Thank you. I think I'll just try what rest will do.

MRS. CASSILIS [*making* LADY MARCHMONT *comfortable*]. I expect that will be best. Put your head back, dear. Headaches are such trying things, aren't they, Mrs. Borridge? This way! And you're to keep quite quiet till luncheon, Margaret

[LADY MARCHMONT *closes her eyes, with a sigh of relief. After a moment enter* BUTLER *from house, with* MRS. HERRIES]

BUTLER. Mrs. Herries.

LADY MARCHMONT [*rises, and goes up to meet her*]. How do you do? Mrs. Cassilis is in the garden, Watson. [*To* MRS. HERRIES] She has just gone for a stroll with Mrs. Borridge.

MRS. HERRIES. Oh, pray don't disturb her. Pray don't. I can only stay for a moment. Literally a moment.

LADY MARCHMONT. But she would be so sorry to miss you. Will you let her know, Watson? She went that way.

[*Pointing to path along which* MRS. CASSILIS *went a moment before*]

BUTLER. Yes, my lady.

LADY MARCHMONT. And how's the dear Rector? [*She and* MRS. HERRIES *sit*] You've not brought him with you?

MRS. HERRIES. No. He was too busy. There is always so much to do in these *small* parishes, isn't there?

LADY MARCHMONT. Indeed?

MRS. HERRIES. Oh yes. There's the garden — and the pigs. The Rector is devoted to his pigs, you know. And his roses.

LADY MARCHMONT. The Rector's roses are quite famous, aren't they?

[*But* MRS. HERRIES *has not come to Deynham to talk horticulture, but to inquire about a far more interesting subject. She looks round cautiously, and then, lowering her voice to an undertone, puts the important question*]

MRS. HERRIES. And now tell me, dear Lady Marchmont, before Mrs. Cassilis comes back, what is she like?

LADY MARCHMONT. Really, dear Mrs. Herries, I think I must leave you to decide that for yourself.

MRS. HERRIES [*sighs*]. So bad as that! The Rector feared so. And the

mother? [*No answer*] Just so! What a pity. An *orphan* is so much easier to deal with.

LADY MARCHMONT [*laughing slightly*]. You may be glad to hear that Mr. Borridge *is* dead.

MRS. HERRIES. So Mrs. Cassilis said. How fortunate! How very fortunate!

[MRS. CASSILIS, *followed by* MRS. BORRIDGE, *return from their walk.* WATSON *brings up the rear*]

MRS. HERRIES. *Dear* Mrs. Cassilis, how do you do? [*Sympathetically*] *How* are you?

MRS. CASSILIS [*rather amused at* MRS. HERRIES'S *elaborate bedside manner*]. Quite well, thanks. It's Margaret who is unwell.

MRS. HERRIES. Indeed! She didn't mention it.

LADY MARCHMONT [*hurriedly*]. I have a headache.

MRS. HERRIES. I'm so *sorry*.

MRS. CASSILIS [*sweetly*]. You have heard of my son's engagement, haven't you? Dear Ethel is with us now, I'm glad to say. Let me introduce you to her mother.

MRS. HERRIES. How do you do? [*Bows*] What charming weather we're having, aren't we?

MRS. CASSILIS. You'll stay to luncheon now you are here, won't you?

[MRS. BORRIDGE *subsides into a chair*]

MRS. HERRIES. I'm afraid I mustn't. I left the Rector at home. He will be expecting me.

MRS. CASSILIS. Why didn't you bring him with you?

MRS. HERRIES. So kind of you, dear Mrs. Cassilis. [*Nervously*] But he hardly liked — How is *poor* Geoffrey?

MRS. CASSILIS [*cheerfully*]. He's very well. He's in the kitchen garden with Ethel. At the strawberry bed. You'll see them if you wait.

MRS. HERRIES [*hastily*]. I'm afraid I can't. In fact, I must run away at once. I only looked in in passing. It's nearly one o'clock, and the Rector always likes his luncheon at one. [*Shakes hands with gush of sympathetic fervour*] Good-bye, dear Mrs. Cassilis. Good-bye, Mrs. Borridge. [*Bows*]

MRS. BORRIDGE [*stretching out her hand*]. Good-bye, Mrs. — I didn't rightly catch your name.

MRS. HERRIES. Herries. Mrs. Herries. [*Shakes hands nervously*]

MRS. BORRIDGE [*heartily*]. Good-bye, Mrs. 'Erris.

MRS. CASSILIS. And you're coming over to dine on Thursday? That's today week, you know. *And* the Rector, of course. You won't forget?

MRS. HERRIES. With pleasure. Good-bye, Lady Marchmont.

[*Looks at* MRS. BORRIDGE, *who has turned away, then at* LADY MARCHMONT, *then goes off, much depressed, into the house. Pause*]

MRS. BORRIDGE. I think I'll be going in too, Mrs. Cassilis, just to put myself straight for dinner.

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. Do. Luncheon will be ready in half an hour. [MRS. BORRIDGE *waddles off into the house complacently.* LADY MARCHMONT *sinks limply into a chair, with a smothered groan.* MRS. CASSILIS *resumes her natural voice*] How's your headache, Margaret? Better?

LADY MARCHMONT. Quite well. In fact, I never had a headache. That was a little deception on my part, dear, to excuse my absence from the breakfast table. Will you forgive me? [MRS. CASSILIS *nods without a smile. She looks perfectly wretched.* LADY MARCHMONT *makes a resolute effort to cheer her up by adopting a light tone, but it is obviously an effort*] Breakfasts *are* rather a mistake, aren't they? So trying to the temper. And that awful woman! I felt a brute for deserting you. On the very first morning too. But I didn't feel strong enough to face her again so soon. How *could* Geoffrey do it!

MRS. CASSILIS [*grimly*]. Geoffrey's not going to marry *Mrs.* Borridge.

LADY MARCHMONT. He's going to marry the daughter. And she'll grow like her mother ultimately. All girls do, poor things.

MRS. CASSILIS [*sighs*]. Poor Geoffrey. I suppose there's something wrong in the way we bring boys up. When they reach manhood they seem quite unable to distinguish between the right sort of woman and — the other sort. A pretty face, and they're caught at once. It's only after they've lived for a few years in the world and got soiled and hardened — got what we call experience, in fact — that they even begin to understand the difference.

LADY MARCHMONT [*decidedly*]. You ought to have sent Geoffrey to a public school. His father ought to have insisted on it.

MRS. CASSILIS. Poor Charley died when Geoff was only twelve. And when I was left alone I couldn't make up my mind to part with him. Besides, I hate the way public school boys look on women.

LADY MARCHMONT Still, it's a safeguard.

MRS. CASSILIS [*dismally*]. Perhaps it is.

[*Neither of the sisters speaks for a moment. Both are plunged in painful thought. Suddenly* LADY MARCHMONT *looks up and catches sight of* MRS. CASSILIS'S *face, which looks drawn and miserable. She goes over to her with something like a cry*]

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear Adelaide, don't look like that. You frighten me.

MRS. CASSILIS [*pulling herself together*]. What's the matter?

LADY MARCHMONT. Your face looked absolutely *grey!* Didn't you sleep last night?

MRS. CASSILIS. Not very much. [*Trying to smile*] Has my hair gone grey, too?

LADY MARCHMONT. Of course not.

MRS. CASSILIS. I feared it might.

LADY MARCHMONT. You poor dear!

MRS. CASSILIS [*impulsively*]. I *am* pretty still, am I not, Margaret?

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear, you look perfectly sweet, as you always do. Only there *are* one or two little lines I hadn't noticed before. But your *hair's* lovely.

MRS. CASSILIS [*eagerly*]. I'm glad of that. I shall need all my looks now — for Geoffrey's sake

LADY MARCHMONT [*puzzled*]. Geoffrey's?

MRS. CASSILIS. Looks mean so much to a man, don't they? And he has always admired me. Now I shall want him to admire me more than ever.

LADY MARCHMONT. Why, dear?

MRS. CASSILIS [*with cold intensity*]. Because I have a rival.

LADY MARCHMONT. This detestable girl?

MRS. CASSILIS [*nods*]. Yes.

LADY MARCHMONT. My dear Adelaide, isn't it too late now?

MRS. CASSILIS. Too late? Why, the time has scarcely begun. At present Geoffrey is over head and ears in love with her. While that goes on we can do nothing. [*With absolute conviction*] But it won't last.

LADY MARCHMONT [*surprised at her confidence*]. Won't it?

MRS. CASSILIS. No. That kind of love never does. It dies because it is a thing of the senses only. It has no foundation in reason, in common tastes, common interests, common associations. So it dies. [*With a bitter smile*] *My* place is by its deathbed.

LADY MARCHMONT [*with a slight shudder*]. That sounds rather ghoulish.

MRS. CASSILIS. It *is*.

LADY MARCHMONT [*more lightly*]. Are you going to do anything to hasten its demise?

MRS. CASSILIS [*quite practical*]. Oh yes. In the first place, they're to stay here for a *long* visit. I want them to feel thoroughly at home. Vulgar people are so much more vulgar when they feel at home, aren't they?

LADY MARCHMONT. You can hardly expect any change in that direction from *Mrs.* Borridge.

MRS. CASSILIS [*a short, mirthless laugh*]. I suppose not. [*Practical again*] Then I shall ask lots of people to meet them. Oh, *lots* of people. So that Geoffrey may have the benefit of the contrast. I've asked Mabel to stay, by the way — for a week — to help to entertain *dear* Ethel. When those two are together it should open Geoffrey's eyes more than anything.

LADY MARCHMONT. Love is blind.

MRS. CASSILIS [*briskly*]. It sees a great deal better than it used to do, dear. Far better than it did when *we* were young people.

[*Pause*]

LADY MARCHMONT. Anything else?

MRS. CASSILIS. Not at the moment. [*A ghost of a smile*] Yes, by the way. There's Major Warrington.

LADY MARCHMONT [*shocked*]. You're not really going to consult that dissipated wretch?

MRS. CASSILIS [*recklessly*]. I would consult the Witch of Endor if I thought she could help me — and if I knew her address. Oh, I'm prepared to go any lengths. I wonder if he would elope with her for a consideration?

LADY MARCHMONT [*horrified*]. Ade-

laide, you wouldn't do that. It would be dreadful. Think of the scandal.

Mrs. Cassilis. My dear, if she would elope with Watson, I'd raise his wages. [*Rises*]

Lady Marchmont. Adelaide!

Mrs. Cassilis [*defiantly*] I *would*. Ah, Margaret, you've no children. [*Her voice quivering and her eyes shining with intensity of emotion*] You don't know how it feels to see your son wrecking his life and not be able to prevent it. I love my son better than anything else in the whole world. There is nothing I wouldn't do to save him. That is how mothers are made. That's what we're for.

Lady Marchmont [*slight shrug*]. Poor girl!

Mrs. Cassilis [*fiercely*]. You're *not* to pity her, Margaret. I forbid you. She tried to steal away my son.

Lady Marchmont. Still —

Mrs. Cassilis [*impatiently*]. Margaret, don't be sentimental. The girl's not in *love* with Geoffrey. Any one can see that. She's in love with his position and his money, the money he will have some day. She doesn't really care two straws for him. It was a trap, a trap from the beginning, and poor Geoff blundered into it.

Lady Marchmont. She couldn't *make* the omnibus horse fall down!

Mrs. Cassilis. No. That was chance. But after that she set herself to catch him, and her mother egged her on no doubt, and taught her how to play her fish. And you pity her!

Lady Marchmont [*soothingly*]. I don't really. At least, I did for a moment. But I suppose you're right.

Mrs. Cassilis [*vehemently*]. Of course I'm right. I'm Geoffrey's mother. Who should know if I don't? Mothers have eyes. If she really cared for him I should know. I might try to blind myself, but I should *know*. But she doesn't. And she sha'n't marry him. She sha'n't!

Lady Marchmont. My dear, don't glare at me like that. *I'm* not trying to make the match.

Mrs. Cassilis. Was I glaring?

Lady Marchmont. You looked rather tigerish. [Mrs. Cassilis *gives short laugh. Pause*] By the way, as she's *not* to be your daughter-in-law, is it necessary to be quite so affectionate to her all the time? It rather gets on my nerves.

Mrs. Cassilis. It is absolutely necessary. If there were any coolness between us the girl would be on her guard, and Geoffrey would take her side. That would be fatal. Geoffrey must never know how I feel towards her. No! When this engagement is broken off I shall kiss her affectionately at parting, and when the carriage comes round I shall shed tears.

Lady Marchmont [*wondering*]. Why?

Mrs. Cassilis. Because otherwise it would make a division between Geoffrey and me. And I couldn't bear that. I must keep his love whatever happens. And if I have to deceive him a little to keep it, isn't that what we women always have to do? In fact, I shall have to deceive everybody except you. Lady Remenham, Mrs. Herries, the whole county. If they once knew they would be sure to talk. Lady Remenham never does anything else, does she? And later on, when the engagement was all over and done with, Geoffrey would get to hear of it, and he'd never forgive me.

Lady Marchmont. My dear, your unscrupulousness appals me. [Mrs. Cassilis *shrugs impatiently*] Well, it's not very *nice*, you must admit.

Mrs. Cassilis [*exasperated*]. Nice! Of course it's not *nice!* Good heavens, Margaret, you don't suppose I *like* doing this sort of thing, do you? I do it because I must, because it's the only way to save Geoffrey. If Geoffrey married her he'd be miserable, and I won't have that. Of course it would be *pleasanter* to be perfectly straightforward, and tell the girl I detest her. But if I did she'd marry Geoff if only to spite me. So I must trap her as she has trapped him. It's not a *nice* game, but it's the only possible one. [*More calmly*] Yes, I must be on the best of terms with Ethel. [*With a smile of real enjoyment at the thought*] And *you* must make friends with that appalling mother.

Lady Marchmont [*firmly*]. *No*, Adelaide! I refuse!

Mrs. Cassilis [*crosses to her*]. You must. You *must!*

[*Takes her two hands and looks into her eyes*]

Lady Marchmont [*giving way, hypnotised*]. Very well. I'll do my best. [Mrs. Cassilis *drops her hands and turns away with a sigh of relief*] But I sha'n't come down to breakfast! There are limits to my endurance. [*Plaintive*]

And I do so hate breakfasting in my room. The crumbs always get into my bed.

MRS. CASSILIS [*consoling her*]. Never mind. When we've won you shall share the glory.

LADY MARCHMONT [*doubtfully*]. You're going to win?

MRS. CASSILIS [*nods*]. I'm going to win. I've no doubt whatever about that. I've brains and she hasn't. And brains always tell in the end. Besides, she did something this morning which made me sure that I should win.

LADY MARCHMONT [*trying to get back her old lightness of tone*]. She didn't eat with her knife?

MRS. CASSILIS [*resolutely serious*]. No. She — *yawned.*

LADY MARCHMONT [*puzzled*]. Yawned?

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. Three times. When I saw that I knew that I should win.

LADY MARCHMONT [*peevish*]. My dear Adelaide, what *do* you mean?

MRS. CASSILIS. Girls like that can't endure boredom. They're used to excitement, the vulgar excitement of Bohemian life in London. Theatres, supper parties, plenty of fast society. She owned as much this morning. Well, down here she shall be dull, oh, how *dull!* I will see to that. The curate shall come to dinner. And old Lady Bellairs, with her tracts and her trumpet. I've arranged that it shall be a *long* engagement. She shall yawn to some purpose before it's over. And when she's bored she'll get cross. You'll see. She'll begin to quarrel with her mother, and nag at Geoffrey — at every one, in fact, except me. *I* shall be too sweet to her for that. [*With a long look into her sister's eyes*] And that will be the beginning of the end.

LADY MARCHMONT [*turning away her eyes with something like a shiver*]. Well, dear, I think your plan diabolical. [*Rising*] But your courage is perfectly splendid, and I love you for it. [*Lays hand on her shoulder for a moment caressingly*] And now I'll go in and get ready for lunch.

[LADY MARCHMONT *turns to go into the house. As she does so the* BUTLER *comes out, followed by* MABEL *in riding habit.* MRS. CASSILIS'S *manner changes at once. The intense seriousness with which she has been talking to her sister disappears in an instant, and instead you have the charming hostess, without a care in the world, only thinking of welcoming her guest and making her comfortable. It is a triumph of pluck — and breeding*]

BUTLER. Lady Mabel Venning.

MRS. CASSILIS [*rising*]. Ah, Mabel dear, how are you? [*Kisses her*] You've ridden over? But you're going to *stay* here, you know. Haven't you brought your things?

MABEL. Mamma is sending them after me. It was such a perfect morning for a ride. How do you do, Lady Marchmont? [*Shaking hands*]

MRS. CASSILIS. That's right. Watson, tell them to take Lady Mabel's horse round to the stables. She will keep it here while she is with us. [*To* MABEL] Then you'll be able to ride every day with Geoffrey. [*To* LADY MARCHMONT] Poor Ethel doesn't ride. Isn't it unfortunate?

LADY MARCHMONT. Very!

MRS. CASSILIS. She and Geoffrey are down at the strawberry bed spoiling their appetites for luncheon. Would you like to join them?

MABEL. I think not, thanks. It's rather hot, isn't it? I think I'd rather stay here with you.

MRS. CASSILIS. As you please, dear. [*They sit*]

MABEL. Oh, before I forget, mamma asked me to tell you she telegraphed to Uncle Algernon yesterday, and he's coming down next Wednesday. She had a letter from him this morning by the second post. It came just before I started. Such a funny letter. Mamma asked me to bring it to you to read.

MRS. CASSILIS [*taking letter, and reading it aloud to her sister*]. "My dear Julia, — I am at a loss to understand to what I owe the honour of an invitation to Milverton. I thought I had forfeited all claim to it for ever. I can only suppose you have at last found an heiress to marry me. If this is so I may as well say at once that unless she is both extremely rich and extremely pretty I shall decline to entertain her proposal. My experience is that that is a somewhat unusual combination. I will be with you next Wednesday. — Your affectionate brother, A. L. Warrington." [*Giving back letter*] That's

right, then. And now I think I'll just go down to the kitchen garden and tell Geoffrey you're here. [*Rises*] No, don't come too. You stay and entertain Margaret.

[*She goes off by the path leading to the strawberry beds*]

Lady Marchmont. Dear Major Warrington. He always was the most delightfully witty, wicked creature. I'm so glad he's coming while I'm here. Adelaide must be sure and ask him over.

Mabel. Uncle Algernon is coming over to dine this day week — with mamma.

Lady Marchmont. To be sure; I remember.

[*Enter* Geoffrey *quickly from garden*]

Geoffrey. Halloa, Mabel! How do you do? [*Shaking hands*] I didn't know you were here.

Mabel. Mrs. Cassilis has just gone to tell you.

Geoffrey. I know She met us as we were coming back from eating strawberries. We've been perfect pigs. She and Ethel will be here in a moment. I ran on ahead.

Lady Marchmont [*rising*]. Well, it's close on lunch time. I shall go in and get ready.

[Lady Marchmont *goes off into the house, leaving the young people together. They begin to chatter at once with the easy familiarity of long acquaintance*]

Geoffrey. You rode over?

[*Sitting on the arm of her chair*]

Mabel. Yes, on Basil. He really is the sweetest thing. I like him much better than Hector.

Geoffrey. Poor old Hector. He's not so young as he was.

Mabel. No.

[Geoffrey *suddenly remembers that there is something more important than horses which he has to say before* Ethel *arrives. He hesitates for a moment, and then plunges into his subject*]

Geoffrey. Mabel . . . There's something I want to ask you.

Mabel. Is there?

Geoffrey. Yes. But I don't know how to say it. [*Hesitates again*]

Mabel [*smiling*]. Perhaps you'd better not try, then?

Geoffrey. I must. I feel I ought. It's about something Aunt Margaret said yesterday. . . . [*Blushing a little*] Mabel, did you ever . . . did I ever . . . did I ever do anything to make you think I . . . I was going to ask you to marry me?

[*Looking her bravely in the face*]

Mabel [*turning her eyes away*]. No, Geoff.

Geoffrey. Sure?

Mabel. Quite sure.

Geoffrey. I'm glad.

Mabel [*looking up, surprised*]. Why, Geoff?

Geoffrey. Because from what Aunt Margaret said I was afraid, without intending it, I'd . . . I — hadn't been quite honourable.

Mabel [*gently*]. You have always been everything that is honourable, Geoff. And everything that is kind.

Geoffrey [*relieved*]. Thank you, Mabel. You're a brick, you know. And we shall always be friends, sha'n't we?

Mabel. Always. [*Rises*]

Geoffrey. And you'll be friends with Ethel too?

Mabel. If she'll let me.

Geoffrey. Of course she'll let you. She's the dearest girl. She's ready to be friends with everybody. And she'll *love* you, I know. [*Stands up*] You promise? [*Holds out hand*]

Mabel [*takes it*]. I promise.

[Mrs. Cassilis *and* Ethel *enter at this moment from garden.* Mrs. Cassilis *has her arm in* Ethel's, *and they make a picture of mutual trust and affection which would make* Lady Marchmont *scream. Luckily, she is safely in her room washing her hands.* Mrs. Cassilis *smiles sweetly at* Mabel *as she speaks, but does not relax her hold on her future daughter-in-law*]

Mrs. Cassilis. Not gone in to get ready yet, Mabel?

Mabel. No. Lady Marchmont only went a minute ago.

Mrs. Cassilis. [*To* Ethel] You've not met Mabel yet, have you? I must introduce you. Miss Borridge — Lady Mabel Venning. [*Sweetly*] I want you two to be great friends! [*They shake hands*] And now come in and get ready for luncheon.

[*They all move towards the house as the curtain falls*]

ACT III

SCENE. — *The smoking-room at Deynham. A week has elapsed since the last Act, and the time is after dinner. The room has two doors, one leading to the hall and the rest of the house, the other communicating with the billiard-room. There is a fireplace on the left, in which a fire burns brightly. A writing-table occupies the centre of the stage. Further up is a grand piano. By its side a stand with music on it. Obviously a man's room from the substantial writing-table, with the cigar-box on it, and the leather-covered arm-chairs. "The Field" and "The Sportsman" lie on a sofa hard by. The room is lighted by lamps. The stage is empty when the curtain rises. Then* GEOFFREY *enters from hall. He crosses to the door of the billiard-room, opens it, and looks in. Then turns and speaks to* MAJOR WARRINGTON, *who has just entered from hall.* WARRINGTON *is a cheerful, rather dissipated-looking man of five-and-forty.*

GEOFFREY. It's all right, Warrington. They've lighted the lamps.

WARRINGTON. Good.

[*Strolling across towards fireplace*]

GEOFFREY [*at door of billiard-room*]. How many will you give me?

WARRINGTON. Oh, hang billiards! I'm not up to a game to-night. That was only an excuse to get away from the women. I believe that's why games were invented. But if you *could* get me a whisky and soda I should be your eternal debtor. Julia kept such an infernally strict watch on me all the evening that I never got more than a glass and a half of champagne. A fellow can't get along on *that*, can he?

GEOFFREY. I'll ring.

WARRINGTON. Do. There's a good fellow. [GEOFFREY *rings*] Every man requires a certain amount of liquid per day. I've seen the statistics in "The Lancet." But Julia never reads "The Lancet." Women never do read anything, I believe.

GEOFFREY. Have another cigar?

WARRINGTON. Thanks. Don't mind if I do. [*Takes one and lights it*] Aren't you going to?

GEOFFREY [*who looks seedy and out of spirits*]. No, thanks.

[*Enter* FOOTMAN, *with whisky and soda*]

Whisky and soda, James.

FOOTMAN. Yes, sir.

[*Puts it on small table and goes out*]

WARRINGTON. Off your smoke?

GEOFFREY. Yes. [*Pouring whisky*] Say when.

WARRINGTON. When. [*Takes soda*] You're not going to have one?

GEOFFREY. No.

WARRINGTON. Off your drink?

GEOFFREY. Yes.

WARRINGTON. That's bad. What's the matter?

[*Selects comfortable easy-chair and sits lazily*]

GEOFFREY. Oh, nothing. I'm a bit out of sorts, I suppose.

WARRINGTON. How well your mother looks to-night, by the way! Jove, what a pretty woman she is!

GEOFFREY. Dear mother.

WARRINGTON [*sips whisky meditatively*]. How does she like this marriage of yours?

GEOFFREY [*off-hand*]. All right.

WARRINGTON. Ah! [*Nods*] Bites on the bullet. No offence, my dear fellow. I like her pluck.

GEOFFREY [*exasperated*]. I assure you, you're mistaken. My mother's been kindness itself over my engagement. She's never said a word against it from the first. I believe she's the only person in this infernal county who hasn't.

WARRINGTON. Except myself.

GEOFFREY. Except yourself. And *you* think me a thundering young fool.

WARRINGTON. Oh no.

GEOFFREY. Oh yes. I could see you looking curiously at me all through dinner — when you weren't eating — as if I were some strange beast. You think I'm a fool right enough.

WARRINGTON [*stretching himself luxuriously*]. Not at all. Miss Borridge is a very pretty girl, very bright, very amusin'. I sat next her at dinner, you know. Not quite the sort one *marries*, perhaps — as a rule —

GEOFFREY [*crossly*]. What do you mean?

WARRINGTON [*shrugs*]. Anyhow, *you're* going to marry her. So much the better for *her*. What amuses me is your bringing her old reprobate of a mother down here. The cheek of it quite takes away my breath.

GEOFFREY [*peevish*]. What's the matter with her mother? She's common, of course, and over-eats herself, but lots of people do that. And she's good-natured. That's more than some women are.

WARRINGTON [*looking thoughtfully at the end of his cigar*]. Still, she's scarcely the sort one introduces to one's *mother*, eh? But I'm old-fashioned, no doubt. There's no saying what you young fellows will do. Your code is peculiarly your own.

[*Wanders across in quest of another whisky and soda*]

GEOFFREY [*restively*]. Look here, Warrington, what do you mean?

WARRINGTON [*easily*]. Want to hit me in the eye, don't you? *I* know. Very natural feeling. Lots of people have it.

GEOFFREY [*sulkily*]. Why shouldn't I introduce her to my mother?

WARRINGTON. Well, she's a disreputable old woman, you know. She lived with Borridge for years before he married her. The other daughter's — [*Shrugs shoulders*] And then to bring her down here and introduce her to Julia! Gad, I like your humour.

GEOFFREY [*much perturbed at his companion's news*]. Are you sure?

WARRINGTON [*nonchalantly*]. Sure? Why, it's common knowledge. Everybody knows old Borridge, and most people loathe her. I don't. I rather like her in a way. She's so splendidly vulgar. Flings her aitches about with reckless indifference. And I like her affection for that girl. She's really fond of *her*. So much the worse for you, by the way. You'll never be able to keep them apart.

GEOFFREY [*irritably*]. Why should I want to keep them apart?

WARRINGTON. Why should you —? [*Drinks*] Oh, well, my dear chap, if *you're* satisfied —

GEOFFREY [*low voice*]. Her sister . . . ? Poor Ethel! Poor Ethel!

WARRINGTON [*with a good-natured effort to make the best of things*]. My dear chap, don't be so down in the mouth. There's no use fretting. I'd no idea you were so completely in the dark about all this, or I wouldn't have told you. Cheer up.

GEOFFREY [*huskily*]. I'm glad you told me.

WARRINGTON. To think you've been engaged all this time and never found it out! What amazing innocence! [*Chuckling*] Ha! Ha! . . . Ha! Ha! Ha!

GEOFFREY. Don't.

[*Sinks on to sofa with a groan*]

WARRINGTON. Sorry, my dear boy. But it's so devilish amusing.

GEOFFREY. How blind I've been! How utterly blind!

WARRINGTON [*shrugs shoulders*]. Well, I rather like a chap who's a bit of an ass myself.

GEOFFREY. Poor mother!

WARRINGTON. Doesn't she know? Not about old Borridge? [GEOFFREY *shakes his head*] She must! Women always do. They have an instinct about these things that is simply uncanny. It's often highly inconvenient too, by the way. She probably says nothing on *your* account.

GEOFFREY [*dismally*]. Perhaps so. Or Ethel's. She's been wonderfully kind to Ethel ever since she came down. Perhaps that's the reason. [*Rises*] After all, it's not Ethel's fault.

WARRINGTON. Of course not. [*Looks at him curiously, then, with an instinct of kindliness, goes to him and lays hand on shoulder*] Well, here's luck, my dear boy, and I won't say may you never repent it, but may you put off repenting it as long as possible. That's the best one can hope of most marriages.

GEOFFREY [*drily*]. Thanks!

WARRINGTON. Well, it's been an uncommon amusin' evening. Mrs. Herries' face has been a study for a lifetime. And as for Julia's — oh, outraged respectability! What a joy it is!

[*Further conversation is interrupted by the entrance of the other guests from the hall. These are* LADY REMENHAM, LADY MARCHMONT, MRS. HERRIES, MRS. BORRIDGE, ETHEL, *and* MABEL. *Last of all comes the* RECTOR, *with* MRS. CASSILIS. *They enter with a hum of conversation*]

RECTOR. [*To his hostess*] Well, he's a disreputable poaching fellow. It's no more than he deserved.

MRS. CASSILIS [*nods dubiously*]. Still, I'm sorry for his wife.

MRS. HERRIES. I'll send down to her in the morning and see if she wants anything.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*beaming with good humour*]. So this is where you gentlemen have got to!

GEOFFREY. I brought Major Warrington to smoke a cigar.

LADY REMENHAM [*looking fixedly at whisky, then at* WARRINGTON]. Algernon!

WARRINGTON [*protesting*]. My dear Julia, I believe there is nothing unusual in a man's requiring *one* whisky and soda at this time in the evening.

LADY REMENHAM. I trust it has been only one.

[*Sits on sofa, where she is joined by* LADY MARCHMONT]

WARRINGTON [*changing the subject*]. Whom have you been sending to jail for poaching now, Rector? No Justice's justice, I hope?

RECTOR. Old Murcatt. He's one of Mrs. Cassilis's tenants. A most unsatisfactory fellow. He was caught red-handed laying a snare in the Milverton woods. It was a clear case.

[ETHEL *stifles a yawn*]

ETHEL. I should have thought there was no great harm in that.

RECTOR. My dear young lady!

MRS. CASSILIS. Take care, Ethel dear. An Englishman's hares are sacred.

MRS. BORRIDGE. How silly! I can't bear 'are myself.

[*Seats herself massively in armchair in front of piano. An awkward silence follows this insult to hares. As it threatens to grow oppressive, the* RECTOR *tries what can be done with partridges to bridge the gulf*]

RECTOR. You'll have plenty of partridges this year, Mrs. Cassilis. We started five coveys as we drove here.

MRS. CASSILIS [*acknowledging his help with a smile*]. We generally have a good many.

[ETHEL, *stifling another yawn, strolls to piano, opens it, and strikes a note or two idly*]

MABEL. You play, I know, Ethel. Won't you play something?

ETHEL [*sulkily*]. No.

[*Turns away, closing piano sharply. Another constrained silence*]

MRS. HERRIES. I saw you out riding to-day, Mabel. I looked in at Dobson's cottage. Poor fellow, I'm afraid he's very ill.

MABEL. Yes. I was with Geoffrey. We had a long ride, all through Lower Milverton and Carbury to Mirstoke. It was delightful.

MRS. BORRIDGE. [*To* MRS. HERRIES] Your husband has a lot of that sort of thing to do down here, I suppose, Mrs. 'Erris?

MRS. HERRIES [*with frosty politeness*]. When people are ill they generally like a visit from a clergyman, don't they?

MRS. BORRIDGE [*bluntly*]. Well, there's no accounting for tastes. My 'usband, when he was ill, wouldn't 'ave a parson *near* 'im. Said it gave 'im the creeps.

[*Another silence that can be felt.* WARRINGTON'S *shoulders quiver with delight, and he chokes hurriedly into a newspaper*]

LADY MARCHMONT [*crossing to fire, with polite pretence that it is the physical, not the social, atmosphere that is freezing her to the bone*]. How sensible of you to have a fire, Adelaide.

MRS. CASSILIS [*throwing her a grateful look*]. It is pleasant, isn't it? These July evenings are often cold in the country.

[ETHEL *stifles a prodigious yawn*]

GEOFFREY [*going to her*]. Tired, Ethel?

ETHEL [*pettishly*]. No.

[*Glowers at him. He turns away with slight shrug. There is yet another awkward pause*]

MRS. CASSILIS [*rising nervously*]. Won't somebody play billiards? Are the lamps lighted, Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY. Yes, mother.

MRS. CASSILIS. Or shall we play pyramids? Then we can all join in. [*Persuasively*] *You'll* play, Mrs. Borridge, I'm sure?

MRS. BORRIDGE [*beaming*]. I'm on.

MRS. CASSILIS. You, Lady Remenham?

LADY REMENHAM. No, thanks. Mrs. Herries and I are going to stay by the fire and talk about the Rector's last sermon.

[*The* RECTOR *raises hands in horror*]

MRS. CASSILIS. You, Margaret?

LADY MARCHMONT. No, really. I've never played pyramids in my life.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*in high good humour*]. Then it's 'igh time you began, Lady Marchmont. *I'll* teach you.

[MRS. CASSILIS *looks entreaty.* LADY MARCHMONT *assents, smiling*]

LADY MARCHMONT. Very well. To please you, dear Mrs. Borridge!

[LADY MARCHMONT *goes off to billiard-room, followed a moment later by* MABEL]

MRS. CASSILIS. You, Mabel? That's three. Ethel four.

ETHEL. No, thank you, Mrs. Cassilis. I won't play.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Why not, Eth? You're a nailer at pyramids.

ETHEL [*pettishly*]. Because I'd rather not, mother. [*Turns away*]

MRS. BORRIDGE. All right, dearie. You needn't snap my nose off.

[*Goes off to billiard-room with unruffled cheerfulness*]

MRS. CASSILIS. Geoffrey five. The Rector six.

RECTOR. Very well, if you won't play for money. I've no conscientious objections to playing for money, but whenever I do it I always lose. Which comes to the same thing.

[*Follows* MRS. BORRIDGE *off*]

MRS. CASSILIS. You, Major Warrington, of course?

WARRINGTON [*laughing*]. No, thanks. I shall stay here and flirt with Mrs. Herries.

MRS. CASSILIS. Very well. How many did I say? Six, wasn't it? And myself seven. Coming, Geoff?

GEOFFREY. All right, mother.

[GEOFFREY *looks doubtfully at* ETHEL *for a moment, and even takes a step towards her, but she takes no notice of him. Baffled, he turns to his mother, who leads him off after the others.* LADY REMENHAM *settles herself comfortably in arm-chair above the fireplace.* MRS. HERRIES *takes another by her, and they begin to gossip contentedly.* ETHEL *looks sullenly in their direction.* WARRINGTON *makes a valiant effort to retrieve his glass from the mantelpiece, with a view to replenishing it with whisky*]

LADY REMENHAM. Now, Mrs. Herries, draw up that chair to the fire, and we'll talk scandal.

WARRINGTON [*stretching out hand towards glass*]. The Rector's sermon, Julia!

LADY REMENHAM. Algernon!

[*He stops dead.* ETHEL *seats herself in the armchair behind the writing-table, puts her elbows on the table, and glares into vacancy, looking rather like a handsome fury. Presently* WARRINGTON *joins her. She yawns with unaffected weariness.* WARRINGTON *looks at her with an amused smile*]

WARRINGTON. Bored, Miss Borridge?

ETHEL. I wonder.

WARRINGTON [*draws up chair by her*]. I don't. [*She laughs*] Life isn't very lively down here till the shooting begins.

ETHEL [*drumming with her fingers on table*]. I don't shoot. So I'm afraid that won't help me much.

WARRINGTON. I remember. Nor ride, I think you told me?

ETHEL [*yawns*]. Nor ride.

WARRINGTON. Gad. I'm sorry for you.

ETHEL [*looking curiously at him*]. I believe you really are.

WARRINGTON. Of course I am.

ETHEL. I don't know about "of course." Except for Mrs. Cassilis — and poor Geoff — who doesn't count — I don't find much sympathy in *this* part of the country. Heigho! How they hate me!

WARRINGTON [*protesting*]. No, no.

ETHEL. Oh yes, they do. Every one of them. From Watson, who pours out my claret at dinner, and would dearly love to poison it, to your sister, who is glaring at us at this moment.

[*As, indeed,* LADY REMENHAM *is doing with some intensity. She highly disapproves of her brother's attentions to* ETHEL, *but, as there is no very obvious method of stopping them, she says nothing. Presently she and* MRS. HERRIES *begin a game of bezique, and that for the time, at least, distracts her attention from her brother's depravity*]

WARRINGTON [*looking up and laughing*]. Dear Julia. She never had any manners.

ETHEL. She's no worse than the rest. Mrs. Herries would do just the same if she dared. And as for Mabel —!

WARRINGTON. Don't hit it off with Mabel?

ETHEL. Oh, we don't quarrel, if that's what you mean, or call one another names across the table. I wish we did. I could beat her at that. We're as civil as the Devil. [*He laughs*] What *are* you laughing at?

WARRINGTON. Only at the picturesqueness of your language.

ETHEL [*shrugs*]. Yes, Mabel despises me, and I *hate* her.

WARRINGTON. Why?

ETHEL [*wearily*]. Because we're different, I suppose. She's everything I'm not. She's well-born and well-bred. Her father's an earl. Mine was a bookmaker.

WARRINGTON. Is that all?

ETHEL [*bitterly*]. No. She's running after Geoffrey. [WARRINGTON *looks incredulous*] She is!

WARRINGTON [*raising eyebrows*]. Jealous?

ETHEL. Yes. I am jealous. Little beast! [*Picks up flimsy paper-knife.*] I'd like to *kill* her.

[*Makes savage jab with knife. It promptly breaks*]

WARRINGTON [*taking pieces out of her hand*]. Don't be violent.

[*Carries pieces blandly to fire.* ETHEL *stares straight in front of her. Meantime* LADY REMENHAM *has been conversing in an undertone with* MRS. HERRIES, *occasionally glancing over her shoulder at the other two. In the sudden hush which follows* WARRINGTON'S *movement towards the fireplace her voice suddenly becomes alarmingly audible*]

LADY REMENHAM. Such a common little thing, too! And *I* don't even call her pretty.

MRS. HERRIES. It's curious how Mrs. Cassilis seems to have taken to her.

LADY REMENHAM. Yes. She even tolerates that awful mother. [*Irritably*] What *is* it, Algernon?

WARRINGTON [*blandly*]. Only a little accident with a paper-knife.

[LADY REMENHAM *grunts.* WARRINGTON *returns to* ETHEL]

MRS. HERRIES [*lowering her voice discreetly*]. For Geoffrey's sake, of course. She's so devoted to him.

LADY REMENHAM. It may be that. *I'm* inclined to think her mind has given way a little. I asked her about it last week.

[*The two ladies drop their voices again to a murmur, but* ETHEL *has heard the last remark or two, and looks like murder*]

WARRINGTON [*sitting by* ETHEL *and resuming interrupted thread*]. You were going to tell me what makes you think Mabel is in love with Geoffrey.

ETHEL. Was I?

WARRINGTON. Weren't you?

ETHEL. Well, perhaps I will.

WARRINGTON. Go ahead.

ETHEL. She's staying here, and they're always together. They ride almost every morning. I can't ride, you know. And Geoffrey loves it.

WARRINGTON. You should take to it.

ETHEL. I did try one day. They were just starting when I suddenly said I'd like to go with them.

WARRINGTON [*starting*]. What did they say to that?

ETHEL. Oh, Mabel pretended to be as pleased as possible. She lent me an old habit, and Geoff said they'd let me have a horse that was as quiet as a lamb. Horrid kicking beast!

WARRINGTON. What horse was it?

ETHEL. It was called Jasmine, or some such name.

WARRINGTON. Mrs. Cassilis's mare? Why, my dear girl, she hasn't a kick in her.

ETHEL. Hasn't she! . . . Anyhow, we started. So long as we walked it was all right, and I began to think I might actually get to like it. But soon we began to trot — and that was *awful!* I simply screamed. The beast stopped at once. But I went on screaming till they got me off.

WARRINGTON. What did Geoffrey say?

ETHEL. Nothing. But he looked terrible. Oh, how he despised me!

WARRINGTON. Poor girl.

ETHEL. They brought me back, walking all the way. And Geoff offered to give up riding in the mornings if I liked. [WARRINGTON *whistles*] But, of course, I had to say no. So now they go out together every day, and often don't come back till lunch.

WARRINGTON. And what do *you* do?

ETHEL [*wearily*]. I sit at home and yawn and yawn. [*Does so*] Mrs. Cassilis takes me out driving sometimes. She does what she can to amuse me. But of course she's busy in the mornings.

WARRINGTON. What does Mrs. Borridge do?

ETHEL. Lady Marchmont looks after her. I believe she gets a kind of pleasure in leading her on and watching her make a fool of herself. Old cat! And mother sees nothing. She's as pleased with herself as possible. She's actually made Lady Marchmont promise to come and stay with us in London!

WARRINGTON. Bravo, Mrs. Borridge!

Ethel. So I sit here in the drawing-room with a book or the newspaper and I'm bored! bored!

Warrington. And Geoffrey?

Ethel. He doesn't seem to notice. If I say anything to him about it he just says I'm not *well!* He's very kind and tries to find things to amuse me, but it's a strain. And so it goes on day after day. Heigho! [*A short silence*]

Warrington. Well, my dear, I admire your courage.

Ethel [*surprised*]. What do you mean?

Warrington. A lifetime of this! Year in year out. Till you can yawn yourself decently into your grave.

Ethel [*alarmed*]. But it won't always be like this. We sha'n't *live* here, Geoff and I.

Warrington. Oh yes, you will. Mrs. Cassilis was talking only at dinner of the little house she was going to furnish for you both down here, just on the edge of the Park. So that you could always be near her.

Ethel. But Geoff has his profession.

Warrington. His profession is only a name. He makes nothing at it. And never will. Geoffrey's profession is to be a country gentleman and shoot pheasants.

Ethel. But we shall have a house in London as well.

Warrington [*shaking his head*]. Not you. As long as his mother lives Geoffrey will be dependent on her, you know. He has nothing worth calling an income of his own. And he's proud. He won't accept more from her than he's obliged even if her trustees would allow her to hand over anything substantial to him on his marriage — which they wouldn't.

Ethel [*defiantly*]. I shall refuse to live down here.

Warrington. My dear, you won't be asked. You'll have to live where Mrs. Cassilis provides a house for you. Besides, Geoff will prefer it. He likes the country, and he's devoted to his mother.

Ethel. Phew!

Warrington. Happily, it won't last for ever. I dare say you'll have killed poor Mrs. Cassilis off in a dozen years or so. Though you never know how long people will last nowadays, by the way. These modern doctors are the devil.

Ethel. Kill her off? What do you mean? I don't want to kill Mrs. Cassilis. I like her.

Warrington [*looking at her in genuine astonishment*]. My dear young lady, you don't suppose you'll be able to *stand* this sort of thing, do you? Oh no. You'll kick over the traces, and there'll be no end of a scandal, and Geoff'll blow his brains out — if he's got any — and she'll break her heart, and that'll be the end of it.

Ethel [*fiercely*]. It won't.

Warrington. Oh yes, it will. You don't know what Country Society is. The dulness of it! How it eats into your bones. *I* do.

Ethel. Does it bore *you* too?

Warrington. Bore? It bores me to *tears!* I'm not a bad lot really. At least, no worse than most middle-aged bachelors. But Julia thinks me an utterly abandoned character, and I take care not to undeceive her. Why? Because I find Milverton so intolerable. I used to come down every Christmas. One of those ghastly family reunions. A sort of wake without the corpse. At last I couldn't stand it, and did something perfectly outrageous. I forget what, but I know the servants all gave warning. So now I'm supposed to be thoroughly disreputable, and that ass Remenham won't have me asked to the house. Thank Heaven for that!

Ethel. But Geoff likes the country.

Warrington. I dare say. But Geoffrey and I are different. So are Geoffrey and you. You and I are town birds. He's a country bumpkin. *I* know the breed!

Ethel [*in horror*]. And I shall have to stand this all my life! All my life! [*Savagely*] I won't! I won't!

Warrington [*calmly*]. You will!

Ethel. I won't, I tell you! [Warrington *shrugs*] It's too sickening. [*Pause. She seems to think for a moment, then grasps him by the arm, and speaks eagerly, dropping her voice, and looking cautiously over towards the others*] I say, let's go off to Paris, you and I, and leave all this. It'd be awful fun.

Warrington [*appalled, rising*]. Hush! Hush! For God's sake. Julia'll hear.

Ethel [*almost in a whisper*]. Never mind. What does it matter? Let's go. You'd enjoy it like anything. We'll have no end of a good time.

Warrington [*shaking himself free, desperately*]. My dear young lady,

haven't I just told you that I'm not that sort at all? I'm a perfectly respectable person, of rather austere morality than otherwise.

ETHEL. Rot! You'll come?

[*Grasping his arm again*]

WARRINGTON. No, I won't. I decline. I can't go off with the girl my host is going to marry. It wouldn't be decent. Besides, I don't want to go off with anybody.

ETHEL [*her spirits dropping to zero*]. You won't?

WARRINGTON [*testily*]. No, I won't. And, for goodness' sake, speak lower. Julia's listening with all her ears.

ETHEL [*with a bitter little laugh*]. Poor Major Warrington! How I scared you!

WARRINGTON. I should say you did. I'm not so young as I was. A few years ago, a little thing like that never made me turn a hair. Now I can't stand it.

[*Subsiding into chair and wiping the perspiration from his brow*]

ETHEL. You've gone through it before, then?

WARRINGTON. More than once, my dear.

ETHEL [*dismally*]. And now *you'll* look down on me too.

WARRINGTON [*trying to cheer her up*]. On the contrary, I admire you immensely. In fact, I don't know which I admire more, your pluck or your truly marvellous self-control. To ask me to go off with you without letting Julia hear! [*Looking anxiously towards her*] It was masterly.

ETHEL [*sighs*]. Well, I suppose I shall have to marry Geoff after all.

WARRINGTON. I suppose so. Unless you could go off with the Rector.

[*She laughs shrilly. The two ladies turn sharply and glare*]

ETHEL. Now I've shocked your sister again.

WARRINGTON. You have. She thinks I'm flirting with you. That means I sha'n't be asked down to Milverton for another five years. Thank heaven for that! Ah, here are the billiard players.

[*He rises, with a sigh of relief. The conversation has been amusing, but not without its perils, and he is not altogether sorry to have it safely over.* ETHEL *remains seated, and does not turn round. The billiard players troop in, headed by* MABEL, GEOFFREY *holding open the door for them*]

GEOFFREY. [*To* MABEL] You fluked outrageously, you know.

MABEL [*entering*]. I didn't!

GEOFFREY. Oh yes, you did. Didn't she, mother?

MRS. CASSILIS [*smiling at her*]. Disgracefully.

MRS. BORRIDGE. You'll soon learn, Lady Marchmont, if you practise a bit.

LADY MARCHMONT. Do you think so?

LADY REMENHAM. Well, who won, Rector?

MRS. BORRIDGE. *I* did.

LADY REMENHAM. Indeed?

[*Turns frigidly away, losing all interest at once*]

MRS. BORRIDGE [*obstinately cheerful and friendly*]. Why didn't *you* play, Mrs. 'Erris?

MRS. HERRIES [*frigid smile*]. I never play games.

MRS. BORRIDGE. You should learn. I'd teach you.

MRS. HERRIES [*who longs to be as rude as* LADY REMENHAM *but has not quite the courage*]. Thank you. I fear I have no time.

[*Joins* LADY REMENHAM *again, ruffling her feathers nervously*]

MRS. CASSILIS. Ethel, dear, we missed *you* sadly. I hope you haven't been dull?

ETHEL [*with hysterical laugh*]. Not at all. Major Warrington has been entertaining me.

RECTOR. I suspect Miss Borridge felt there would be no opponent worthy of her steel.

[ETHEL *shrugs her shoulders rudely. He turns away*]

MRS. CASSILIS [*as a last resort*]. I wonder if we could have some music now. Mabel, dear, won't you sing to us?

MABEL. I've got nothing with me.

GEOFFREY. Do sing, Mabel. There'll be lots of things you know here. [*Opens the piano*] Let me find something. Schumann?

MABEL [*shakes head*]. I think not.

[*Joins him in searching music stand*]

MRS. CASSILIS. Sing us that Schubert song you sang when we were dining with you last, dear.

MABEL. Very well. Where's Schubert, Geoffrey?

Ethel. [*To* Warrington] Do you see that?

[*Watching* Geoffrey's *and* Mabel's *heads in close proximity. Seems as if she were about to jump from her chair.* Warrington *restrains her by a hand on her arm*]

Warrington. Sh! Be quiet, for heaven's sake.

Ethel [*hisses*]. The little *cat!*

Mabel. Here it is. Geoff, don't be silly. [*Turns to piano*]

Mrs. Cassilis. Can you see there?

Mabel. Yes, thank you.

[*She sings two verses of Schubert's "Adieu," in German, very simply, in a small but sweet voice. While she sings the behaviour of the guests affords a striking illustration of the English attitude towards music after dinner.* Geoffrey *stands by piano prepared to turn over when required.* Lady Remenham *sits on sofa in an attitude of seraphic appreciation of her daughter's efforts.* Lady Marchmont, *by her side, is equally enthralled — and thinks of something else.* Mrs. Herries *gently beats time with her fan.* Mrs. Cassilis *is sweetly appreciative. The* Borridges, *on the contrary, fall sadly below the standard of polite attention required of them.* Ethel, *who has begun by glaring defiantly at* Mabel *during the first few bars of the song, rapidly comes to the conclusion that she can't sing, and decides to ignore the whole performance.* Mrs. Borridge *begins by settling herself placidly to the task of listening. She is obviously puzzled and rather annoyed when the song turns out to be German, but decides to put up with it with a shrug, hoping it will soon be over. At the end of the first verse she turns to* Mrs. Cassilis *to begin to talk, but that lady, with a smile and a gesture, silences her, and the second verse begins. At this* Mrs. Borridge's *jaw falls, and, after a few bars, she frankly addresses herself to slumber. Her purple, good-natured countenance droops upon her shoulder as the verse proceeds, and when she wakes up at the end it is with a visible start.* Warrington, *meantime, has disgraced himself in the eyes of his sister by talking to* Ethel *during the opening bars of the second verse, and has only been reduced to silence by the stony glare which she thenceforward keeps fixed upon him till the last bar. In self-defence, he leans back in his chair and contemplates the ceiling resolutely*]

Geoffrey [*clapping*]. Bravo! Bravo!

Rector. Charming, charming.

Lady Marchmont. [*To* Lady Remenham] What a sweet voice she has.

Mrs. Cassilis. Thank you, dear.

Rector. [*To* Mabel, *heartily*] Now we must have another.

Geoffrey. Do, Mabel.

Mabel. No. That's quite enough.

Rector [*with resolute friendliness*]. Miss Borridge, *you* sing, I'm sure.

Mrs. Borridge. Do, dearie. [*To* Lady Remenham] My girl has a wonderful voice, Lady Remling. Quite like a professional. Old Jenkins at the Tiv. used to say she'd make a fortune in the 'alls.

Lady Remenham [*frigidly*]. Indeed?

Ethel. I don't think I've any songs any one here would care for.

Mrs. Borridge. Nonsense, dearie. You've lots of songs. Give them "The Children's 'Ome."

Ethel [*rising*]. Well, I'll sing if you like.

Geoffrey [*going to her*]. Shall I find you something, Ethel?

Ethel [*snaps*]. No!

[Geoffrey *turns away snubbed, and joins* Mabel. Ethel *goes to the piano, where she is followed a moment later by* Warrington, *who stands behind it, facing audience, and looking much amused as her song proceeds.* Ethel *takes her seat at piano. There is a moment's pause while she darts a glance at* Geoffrey *standing with* Mabel. *Then she seems to make up her mind, and, without prelude of any kind, plunges into the following refined ditty:*]

When Joey takes me for a walk, me an' my sister Lue,
'E puts 'is arms round both our waists, as lots o' men will do.

We don't allow no liberties, and so we tells 'im plain,
And Joey says 'e's sorry — but 'e does the same again!

(*Spoken*) Well, we're not going to have that, you know. Not likely! We're not that sort. So we just says to 'im:

Stop that, Joey! Stow it, Joe!
Stop that ticklin' when I tell yer toe.
You're too free to suit a girl like me,
Just you stop that ticklin' or I'll slap yer!

When Joe an' me is man an' wife — I thinks 'e loves me true,
I 'ope 'e'll go on ticklin' me — and leave off ticklin' Lue.
'E'll have to leave the girls alone, and mind what 'e's about,
Or 'im an' me an' Lucy 'ill precious soon fall out.

(*Spoken*) Yes, I'm not going to put up with that sort of thing once we're married. Not I. If 'e tries it on I shall just sing out straight:

Now then, all of you.

[*Looks across impudently towards* Lady Remenham, *who bristles with indignation*]

Stop that, Joey! Chuck it, Joe!
Stop that ticklin' when I tell yer toe.
You're too free to suit a girl like me,
Just you drop that ticklin' or I'll slap yer!

[*Sings chorus fortissimo, joined by her delighted mother and by* Warrington, *who beats time sonorously on the top of the piano. For this attention she slaps him cordially on the cheek at the last line, by way of giving an artistic finish to the situation, and then rises, flushed and excited, and stands by the piano, looking defiantly at her horrified audience*]

Warrington. Splendid, by Jove! Capital!

[*That, however, is clearly not the opinion of the rest of the listeners, for the song has what is called a "mixed" reception. The ladies, for the most part, had originally settled themselves into their places prepared to listen to anything which was set before them with polite indifference. A few bars, however, suffice to convince them of the impossibility of that attitude.* Lady Remenham, *who is sitting on the sofa by* Lady Marchmont, *exchanges a horrified glance with that lady, and with* Mrs. Herries *on the other side of the room.* Mabel *looks uncomfortable. The* Rector *feigns abstraction.* Mrs. Cassilis *remains calm and sweet, but avoids every one's eye, and more particularly* Geoffrey's, *who looks intensely miserable. But* Warrington *enjoys himself thoroughly, even down to the final slap, and as for* Mrs. Borridge, *her satisfaction is unmeasured. She beats time to the final chorus, wagging her old head and joining in in stentorian accents, finally jumping up from her chair, clapping her hands, and crying, "That's right, Eth. Give 'em another." In fact, she feels that the song has been a complete triumph for her daughter, and a startling vindication of Old Jenkins's good opinion of her powers. Suddenly, however, she becomes conscious of the horrified silence which surrounds her. The cheers die away on her lips. She looks round the room, dazed and almost frightened, then hurriedly reseats herself in her chair, from which she has risen in her excitement, straightens her wig, and — there is an awful pause*]

Mrs. Cassilis [*feeling she must say something*]. Won't you come to the fire, Ethel? You must be cold out there.

Ethel. Thank you, Mrs. Cassilis. I'm not cold.

Warrington. Jove, Miss Borridge, I'd no idea you could sing like that.

Ethel [*with a sneer*]. Nor had Geoffrey.

Lady Remenham [*rising*]. Well, we must be getting home. Geoffrey, will you ask if the carriage is round?

Geoffrey. Certainly, Lady Remenham. [*Rings*]

Mrs. Herries. We must be going, too. Come, Hildebrand. [*Rising also*]

LADY REMENHAM. Are you coming with us, Mabel?

MRS. CASSILIS. Oh no, I can't spare Mabel yet. She has promised to stay a few days more.

LADY REMENHAM. Very well.

[*Enter* BUTLER]

GEOFFREY. Lady Remenham's carriage.

BUTLER. It's at the door, sir.

GEOFFREY. Very well.

[*Exit* BUTLER]

LADY REMENHAM. Good-bye, then, dear. Such a pleasant evening. Good night, Mabel. We shall expect you when we see you.

[*General leave-takings*]

MRS. HERRIES. Good-bye, Mrs. Cassilis.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Good night, Lady Remling.

[*Holds out hand with nervous cordiality*]

LADY REMENHAM. Good night.

[*Sweeps past her with icy bow.* MRS. BORRIDGE *retires crushed to a chair by fire, and consoles herself with illustrated paper*]

LADY REMENHAM. [*To* WARRINGTON, *who is devoting his last moments to* MISS BORRIDGE]. Algernon.

WARRINGTON. Coming, Julia. [*To* ETHEL] See you in London, then?

GEOFFREY [*stiffly*]. You'll take another cigar, Warrington — to light you home?

WARRINGTON. Thanks. Don't mind if I do.

[GEOFFREY *hands box*]

LADY REMENHAM [*sternly*]. Algernon. We're going to get on our wraps.

[MRS. CASSILIS *and* LADY REMENHAM, MRS. HERRIES *and the* RECTOR, *go out*]

WARRINGTON. All right, Julia. I shall be ready as soon as you are.

GEOFFREY [*motioning to whisky*]. Help yourself, Warrington.

[*Goes out after the others*]

WARRINGTON. [*To* ETHEL, *after helping himself to drink*] Well, my dear, I'm afraid you've done it *this* time!

ETHEL. Done what?

WARRINGTON. Shocked them to some purpose! It was magnificent, but it was scarcely tactics, eh?

ETHEL. I suppose not. [*Fiercely*] But I *wanted* to shock them! Here have they been despising me all the evening for nothing, and when that detestable girl with a voice like a white mouse sang her German jargon, praising her sky-high, I said I'd show them what singing means! And I did!

WARRINGTON. You certainly did! Ha! ha! You should have seen Julia's face when you boxed my ears. If the earth had opened her mouth and swallowed you up like Korah, Dathan and the other fellow, it couldn't have opened wider than Julia's.

ETHEL. Well, she can scowl if she likes. She can't hurt me now.

WARRINGTON. I'm not so sure of that.

ETHEL. She'll have to hurry up. We go to-morrow.

WARRINGTON. Ah, I didn't know. Well, there's nothing like exploding a bomb before you leave, eh? Only it's not always safe — for the operator.

GEOFFREY [*re-entering with* MRS. CASSILIS]. The carriage is round, Warrington. Lady Remenham's waiting.

WARRINGTON. The deuce she is! [*Swallows whisky and soda*] I must fly. Good-bye again. Good-bye, Mrs. Cassilis. A thousand thanks for a most interesting evening.

[WARRINGTON *goes out with* GEOFFREY. *Pause.* ETHEL *stands sullen by fireplace*]

MRS. BORRIDGE [*yawning cavernously*]. Well, I think I shall turn in. Good night, Mrs. Cassilis. [*General handshakes*] Coming, Eth?

ETHEL. In a moment, mother.

[MRS. BORRIDGE *waddles out, with a parting smile from* LADY MARCHMONT. GEOFFREY *returns from seeing* WARRINGTON *off the premises.* MRS. BORRIDGE *wrings his hand affectionately in passing*]

LADY MARCHMONT. I must be off too. And so must you, Mabel. You look tired out.

[*Kisses* MRS. CASSILIS. GEOFFREY *opens door for them*]

MABEL. I am a little tired. Good night.

[*Exeunt* LADY MARCHMONT *and* MABEL]

GEOFFREY. Are you going, mother?

MRS. CASSILIS. Not at once. I've a couple of notes to write.

[GEOFFREY *crosses to fire.* MRS. CASSILIS *goes to writing-table centre, sits facing audience, and appears to begin to write notes.*

GEOFFREY *goes up to* ETHEL *thoughtfully. A silence. Then he speaks in a low tone*]

GEOFFREY. Ethel.

ETHEL. Yes. [*Without looking up*]

GEOFFREY. Why did you sing that song to-night?

ETHEL [*with a sneer*]. To please Lady Remenham.

GEOFFREY. But, Ethel! That's not the sort of song Lady Remenham likes at all.

ETHEL [*impatiently*]. To shock her, then.

GEOFFREY. Ethel!

ETHEL. I think I managed it too!

GEOFFREY. I don't understand. You're joking, aren't you?

ETHEL. Joking!

GEOFFREY. I mean you didn't really do it on purpose to make Lady Remenham angry. I'm sure you didn't.

ETHEL [*very distinctly*]. I tell you I did it on purpose, deliberately, to shock Lady Remenham. I suppose I ought to know.

GEOFFREY [*astonished*]. But why? What made you do such a thing?

ETHEL [*savagely*]. I did it because I chose. Is that plain enough?

GEOFFREY. Still, you must have had a reason. [*No answer. Suspiciously*] Did that fellow Warrington tell you to sing it?

ETHEL [*snaps*]. No.

GEOFFREY. I thought perhaps . . . Anyhow, promise me not to sing such a song again here. [*Silence*] You will promise?

ETHEL. Pooh!

GEOFFREY. Ethel, be reasonable. You must know you can't go on doing that sort of thing here. When we are married we shall live down here. You must conform to the ideas of the people round you. They may seem to you narrow and ridiculous, but you can't alter them.

ETHEL. *You* don't think them narrow and ridiculous, I suppose?

GEOFFREY. No. In this case I think they are right. In many cases.

ETHEL. Sorry I can't agree with you.

GEOFFREY [*gently*]. Ethel, dear, don't let's quarrel about a silly thing like this. If you are going to marry me you *must* take my judgment on a matter of this kind.

ETHEL [*defiantly*]. *Must* I?

GEOFFREY. Yes.

ETHEL. Then I won't. So there. I shall do just exactly as I please. And if you don't like it you can do the other thing. I'm not going to be bullied by you.

GEOFFREY [*reasoning with her*]. My dear Ethel, I'm sure I am never likely to bully you, or to do or say anything that is unkind. But on a point like this I can't give way.

ETHEL. Very well, Geoff. If you think that you'd better break off our engagement, that's all.

GEOFFREY. Ethel! [*With horror*]

ETHEL [*impatiently*]. Well, there's nothing to make faces about, is there?

GEOFFREY. You don't *mean* that. You don't mean you *want* our engagement to come to an end!

ETHEL. Never mind what I want. What do *you* want?

GEOFFREY [*astonished*]. Of course I want it to go on. You know that.

ETHEL [*gesture of despair*]. Very well, then. You'd better behave accordingly. And now, if you've finished your lecture, I'll go to bed. Good night.

[*Is going out, with only a nod to* MRS. CASSILIS, *but she kisses her good night gently.* GEOFFREY *holds door open for her to go out, then goes and stands by fire.* MRS. CASSILIS, *who has watched this scene while appearing to be absorbed in her notes, has risen to go to her room*]

MRS. CASSILIS [*cheerfully*]. Well, I must be off too! Good night, Geoffrey. [*Kisses him*]

GEOFFREY [*absently*]. Good night, mother. [MRS. CASSILIS *goes slowly towards door*] Mother.

MRS. CASSILIS [*turning*]. Yes, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Mother, you don't think I was unreasonable in what I said to Ethel, do you?

MRS. CASSILIS [*seems to think it over*] No, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. Or unkind?

MRS. CASSILIS. No, Geoff.

GEOFFREY. I was afraid. She took it so strangely.

MRS. CASSILIS. She's rather overexcited to-night, I think. And tired, no doubt. [*Encouragingly*] She'll be all right in the morning.

GEOFFREY. You think I did right to speak to her about that song?

MRS. CASSILIS. Quite right, dear. Dear Ethel still has a little to learn.

and, of course, it will take time. But we must be patient. Meantime, whenever she makes any little mistake, such as she made to-night, I think you should certainly speak to her about it. It will be such a help to her! I don't mean *scold* her, of course, but speak to her gently and kindly, just as you did to-night.

GEOFFREY [*despondently*]. It didn't seem to do any good.

MRS. CASSILIS. One never knows, dear. Good night.

[*Kisses him and goes out. He stands thoughtfully looking into the fire, and the curtain falls*]

ACT IV

SCENE. — *The morning-room at Deynham. Time, after breakfast next day. A pleasant room, with French windows at the back open on to the terrace. The sun is shining brilliantly. There is a door to hall on the left. On the opposite side of the room is the fireplace. When the curtain rises* MABEL *and* GEOFFREY *are on the stage.* GEOFFREY *stands by the fireplace.* MABEL *is standing by the open window.* GEOFFREY *looks rather out of sorts and dull.*

MABEL. What a lovely day!

GEOFFREY [*absently*]. Not bad.

[*Pulls out cigarette case*]

MABEL. I'm sure you smoke too much, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY [*smiles*]. I think not.

[*Enter* MRS. CASSILIS *from hall*]

MRS. CASSILIS. Not gone out yet, dears? Why, Mabel, you've not got your habit on.

MABEL. We're not going to ride this morning.

MRS. CASSILIS [*surprised*]. Not going to ride?

MABEL. No. We've decided to stay at home to-day for a change.

MRS. CASSILIS. But why, dear?

MABEL [*hesitating*]. I don't know. We just thought so. That's all.

MRS. CASSILIS. But you must have some reason. You and Geoffrey haven't been quarrelling, have you?

MABEL [*laughing*]. Of course not.

MRS. CASSILIS. Then why aren't you going to ride?

MABEL. Well, we thought Ethel might be dull if we left her all alone.

MRS. CASSILIS. Nonsense, dears. *I'll* look after Ethel. Go up and change, both of you, at once. Ethel would be dreadfully grieved if you gave up your ride for her. Ethel's not selfish. She would never allow you or Geoffrey to give up a pleasure on her account.

[*Crosses to bell*]

GEOFFREY. Well, Mabel, what do you say? [*Going to window*] It is a ripping day.

MABEL. If Mrs. Cassilis thinks so.

MRS. CASSILIS. Of course I think so. Run away, dears, and get your things on. I'll tell them to send round the horses. [*Rings*]

GEOFFREY. All right. Just for an hour. Come on, Mabel. I'll race you to the end of the passage.

[*They run out together, nearly upsetting footman who enters at the same moment*]

MRS. CASSILIS. Lady Mabel and Mr. Geoffrey are going out riding. Tell them to send the horses round. And tell Hallard I want to see him about those roses. I'm going into the garden now.

FOOTMAN. Very well, madam.

[*Exit* FOOTMAN. MRS. CASSILIS *goes out into the garden. A moment later* MRS. BORRIDGE *and* ETHEL *come in from the hall*]

MRS. BORRIDGE [*looking round, then going to easy-chair*]. Mrs. Cassilis isn't here?

ETHEL [*sulkily*]. I dare say she's with the housekeeper.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Very likely. [*Picks up newspaper*] Give me a cushion, there's a good girl. [ETHEL *does so*] Lady Marchmont isn't down yet, I suppose.

ETHEL. No. [*Turns away*]

MRS. BORRIDGE [*putting down paper*]. What's the matter, dearie? You look awfully down.

ETHEL. Nothing.

[*Goes to window and stares out into the sunlight*]

MRS. BORRIDGE. I wish Lady Marchmont came down to breakfast of a morning.

ETHEL [*shrugs*]. Do you?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Yes. It's dull without her. She and I are getting quite chummy.

ETHEL [*irritably, swinging round*].

Chummy! My dear mother, Lady Marchmont's only laughing at you.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Nonsense, Ethel. Laughing at *me*, indeed! I should like to see her!

ETHEL. That's just it, mother. You never will.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Pray, what do you mean by *that*, miss?

ETHEL [*hopeless*]. Oh, it doesn't matter.

[*Goes to fireplace and leans arm on mantelpiece, depressed*]

MRS. BORRIDGE. Now you're sneering at me, and I won't 'ave it — have it. [*Silence*] Do you 'ear?

ETHEL. Yes, I *h*ear.

[*Stares down at fender*]

MRS. BORRIDGE. Very well, then. Don't let me 'ave any more of it. [*Grumbling to herself*] Laughing, indeed! [*Pause. Recovering her composure*] Where's Geoffy?

ETHEL. I don't know.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Out riding, I suppose?

ETHEL. Very likely.

MRS. BORRIDGE. 'E only finished breakfast just before us.

ETHEL. *H*e, mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Dear, dear, 'ow you do go on! You leave my aitches alone. *They're* all right.

ETHEL [*sighs*]. I wish they were! [*Pause*] You've not forgotten we're going away to-day, mother?

MRS. BORRIDGE. To-day? 'Oo says so?

ETHEL. We were only invited for a week.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Were we, dearie? I don't remember.

ETHEL. *I* do. There's a train at 12.15, if you'll ask Mrs. Cassilis about the carriage.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*flustered*]. But I've not let Jane know. She won't be expecting us.

ETHEL. We can telegraph.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Can't we stay another day or two? I'm sure Mrs. Cassilis won't mind. And I'm very comfortable here.

ETHEL [*firmly*]. *No*, mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Why not?

ETHEL [*exasperated*]. In the first place because we haven't been asked. In the second, because I don't want to.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Don't want to?

ETHEL [*snappishly*]. No. I'm sick and tired of this place.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Are you, dearie? I thought we were gettin' on first rate.

ETHEL. *Did* you? Anyhow, we're going, thank goodness, and that's enough. Don't forget to speak to Mrs. Cassilis. I'll go upstairs and pack.

[*As she is crossing the room to go out* MRS. CASSILIS *enters from garden and meets her. She stops.* MRS. CASSILIS *kisses her affectionately*]

MRS. CASSILIS. Going out, Ethel dear? Good morning.

[*Greets* MRS. BORRIDGE]

ETHEL. Good morning.

MRS. CASSILIS [*putting her arm in* ETHEL'S *and leading her up to window*]. Isn't it a lovely day? I woke at five. I believe it was the birds singing under my window.

ETHEL. Did you, Mrs. Cassilis?

[*Enter* LADY MARCHMONT]

LADY MARCHMONT. Good morning, Adelaide. [*Kisses her*] Late again, I'm afraid.

[*Shakes hands with* ETHEL]

MRS. CASSILIS [*sweetly*]. Another of your headaches, dear? I'm so sorry.

LADY MARCHMONT [*ignoring the rebuke*]. Good morning, Mrs. Borridge. I hope *you* slept well.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Sound as a bell. But, then, I was always a onener to sleep. My old man, when 'e was alive, used to say 'e never knew any one sleep like me. And snore! Why 'e declared it kep' 'im awake 'alf the night. But *I* never noticed it.

LADY MARCHMONT [*sweetly*]. That must have been a great consolation for Mr. Borridge.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Your 'usband snore?

LADY MARCHMONT [*laughing*]. No.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Thinks it's low per'aps. . . . They used to say snorin' comes from sleepin' with your mouth open, but *I* don't know. What do *you* think?

LADY MARCHMONT. I really don't know, dear Mrs. Borridge. I must think it over.

[LADY MARCHMONT *takes chair by* MRS. BORRIDGE. *They converse in dumb show.* ETHEL *and* MRS. CASSILIS *come down stage*]

MRS. CASSILIS. What a pretty blouse you've got on to-day, dear.

ETHEL. Is it, Mrs. Cassilis?

MRS. CASSILIS. Sweetly pretty. It goes so well with your eyes. You've lovely eyes, you know.

ETHEL. Do you think so?

MRS. CASSILIS. Of course. So does Geoff.

ETHEL [*disengaging herself*]. Oh, Geoff—Well, I must go upstairs. [*To* MRS. BORRIDGE *in passing*] Don't forget, mummy. [*Exit* ETHEL]

MRS. BORRIDGE. What, dearie? Oh yes. Ethel says we must be packin' our traps, Mrs. Cassilis.

MRS. CASSILIS [*startled*]. Packing?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Yes. She says we mustn't outstay our welcome. She's proud, is my girlie.

MRS. CASSILIS [*with extreme cordiality*]. But you're not thinking of leaving us? Oh, you mustn't do that. Geoff would be so disappointed. And so should I.

MRS. BORRIDGE. I don't *want* to go, I'm sure. Only Ethel said ——

MRS. CASSILIS. There must be some mistake. I counted on you for quite a long visit.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Ethel said we were only asked for a week.

MRS. CASSILIS. But that was before I really knew you, wasn't it? It's quite different now.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*purring delightedly*]. If you feel that, Mrs. Cassilis ——

MRS. CASSILIS. Of course I feel it. I hope you'll stay quite a *long* time yet.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*complacent, appealing to* LADY MARCHMONT, *who nods sympathy*]. There! I told Ethel how it was.

MRS. CASSILIS [*anxious*]. Ethel doesn't *want* to go, does she?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Oh *no*. She'd be delighted to stop on. Only she thought ——

MRS. CASSILIS [*determined to leave* MRS. BORRIDGE *no opportunity to hedge*]. Very well, then. That's settled. You'll stay with us till Geoff and I go to Scotland. That won't be till the middle of August. You promise?

MRS. BORRIDGE. Thank you, Mrs. Cassilis. I call that *real* hospitable! [*Rising*] And now I'll run upstairs and tell my girl, or she'll be packing my black satin before I've time to stop her. She's so 'asty. And I always say nothing spoils things like packing, especially satins. They do crush so.

[MRS. BORRIDGE *waddles out. As soon as the door closes* MRS. CASSILIS *heaves a deep sigh of relief, showing how alarmed she had been lest the* BORRIDGES *should really take their departure. For a moment there is silence. Then* LADY MARCHMONT, *who has watched this scene with full appreciation of its ironic humour, speaks*]

LADY MARCHMONT. How you fool that old woman!

MRS. CASSILIS. So do *you*, dear.

LADY MARCHMONT. Yes. You'll make me as great a hypocrite as yourself before you're done. When you first began I was shocked at you. But now I feel a dreadful spirit of emulation stealing over me.

MRS. CASSILIS [*grimly*]. There's always a satisfaction in doing a thing well, isn't there?

LADY MARCHMONT. You must feel it, then.

MRS. CASSILIS. Thanks.

LADY MARCHMONT [*puzzled*]. Do you really want these dreadful people to stay all that time?

MRS. CASSILIS. Certainly. And to come back, if necessary, in October.

LADY MARCHMONT. Good heavens! Why?

MRS. CASSILIS [*sitting*]. My dear Margaret, as long as that woman and her daughter are here we *may* get Geoffrey out of their clutches. I thought we should manage it last night. Last night was a terrible disillusionment for him, poor boy. But I was wrong. It was too soon.

LADY MARCHMONT. By the way, what did that amusing wretch, Major Warrington, advise?

MRS. CASSILIS. I didn't consult him. I'd no opportunity. Besides, I couldn't have trusted him. He might have gone over to the enemy.

LADY MARCHMONT. Yes. He was evidently attracted to the girl.

MRS. CASSILIS. I suppose so. Major Warrington isn't fastidious where women are concerned.

LADY MARCHMONT. Still, he knew, of course.

MRS. CASSILIS. Only what Lady Remenham would have told him. However, his visit wasn't altogether wasted, I think.

LADY MARCHMONT. That song, you mean?

MRS. CASSILIS. Yes. He gave poor Ethel a glimpse of the Paradise she is turning her back on for ever. London, music-hall songs, rackety bachelors. And that made her reckless. The contrast between Major Warrington and, say, our dear Rector, can hardly fail to have gone home to her.

[*Further conversation is interrupted by the entrance of* ETHEL, *in the worst of tempers.* MRS. CASSILIS *is on her guard at once*]

ETHEL [*bursting out*]. Mrs. Cassilis ——

MRS. CASSILIS [*very sweetly, rising and going to her*]. Ethel, dear, what *is* this I hear? You're not going to run away from us?

ETHEL [*doggedly*]. Indeed we must, Mrs. Cassilis. You've had us for a week. We really mustn't stay any longer.

MRS. CASSILIS. But, my dear, it's *delightful* to have you.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*who has followed hard after her daughter and now enters, flushed and rather breathless*]. There, you see, dearie! What did I tell you?

MRS. CASSILIS. Geoff would be *terribly* distressed if you went away. He'd think I hadn't made you comfortable. He'd scold me dreadfully.

ETHEL. I don't think Geoff will care.

[MRS. BORRIDGE *appeals mutely for sympathy to* LADY MARCHMONT, *who hastens to give it in full measure*]

MRS. CASSILIS [*great solicitude*]. My dear, you've not had any little difference with Geoff? Any quarrel?

ETHEL. No.

MRS. CASSILIS. I was so afraid ——

ETHEL. Still, we oughtn't to plant ourselves on you in this way.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Plant ourselves! Really, dearie, how can you say such things? Plant ourselves!

ETHEL. Oh, do be quiet, mother. [*Stamps her foot*]

MRS. CASSILIS [*soothing her*]. Anyhow, you can't possibly go to-day. The carriage has gone to Branscombe, and the other horse has cast a shoe. And to-morrow there's a dinner-party at Milverton. You'll stay for *that?*

ETHEL. You're very kind, Mrs. Cassilis, but ——

MRS. CASSILIS [*leaving her no time to withdraw*]. That's right, my dear. You'll stay. And next week we'll have some young people over to meet you, and you shall dance all the evening.

MRS. BORRIDGE. There, Ethel!

ETHEL [*hopeless*]. Very well. If you really wish it.

MRS. CASSILIS. Of course I wish it. I'm *so* glad. I sha'n't be able to part with you for a *long* time yet.

[*Kisses her tenderly. But* ETHEL *seems too depressed to answer to these blandishments*]

LADY MARCHMONT [*under her breath*]. Really, Adelaide!

MRS. CASSILIS [*sweetly*]. Into the garden, did you say, Margaret? [*Taking her up towards window*] Very well. The sun *is* tempting, isn't it?

[MRS. CASSILIS *and her sister sail out.* ETHEL *and her mother remain, the former in a condition of frantic exasperation*]

ETHEL. Well, mother, you've done it!

MRS. BORRIDGE [*snapping. She feels she is being goaded unduly*]. Done what, dearie?

ETHEL [*impatiently*]. Oh, you know.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Do you mean about staying on here? But what could I do? Mrs. Cassilis wouldn't *let* us go. You saw that yourself.

ETHEL. You might have stood out.

MRS. BORRIDGE. I did, dearie. I stood out as long as ever I could. But she wouldn't hear of our goin'. You saw that yourself.

ETHEL. Well, mother, don't say I didn't warn you, that's all.

MRS. BORRIDGE. Warn me, dearie?

ETHEL [*breaking out*]. That I was tired of this place. Sick and tired of it! That it was time we were moving.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*placidly*]. Is that all? I'll remember. [*Pause*] How far did you get with the packing?

ETHEL [*impatiently*]. I don't know.

MRS. BORRIDGE. You hadn't packed my black satin?

ETHEL. I don't know. Yes, I think so. I'm not sure. Don't *worry*, mother.

MRS. BORRIDGE [*lamentably*]. It'll be simply covered with creases. I know it will. Run up at once, there's a good girl, and shake it out.

ETHEL [*snaps*]. Oh, bother!

MRS. BORRIDGE. Then I must. How tiresome girls are! Always in the tantrums!

[*Poor old* MRS. BORRIDGE *ambles out grumbling.* ETHEL, *left*

alone, sits scowling furiously at the carpet and biting her nails. There is a considerable pause, during which her rage and weariness are silently expressed. Then Geoffrey *and* Mabel *enter, quite cheerful, in riding things. They make a curious contrast to the almost tragic figure of sulkiness which meets their eyes*]

Geoffrey [*cheerfully*]. Hullo, Ethel! There you are, are you?

Ethel [*sulky*]. You can see me, I suppose.

Mabel. We didn't get our ride after all.

Ethel. Didn't you? [*Turns away*]

Mabel. No. Basil has strained one of his sinews, poor darling. He'll have to lie up for a day or two.

Geoffrey. Isn't it hard luck? It would have been such a glorious day for a ride. We were going round by Long Winton and up to Tenterden's farm and ——

Ethel [*snaps*]. You needn't trouble to tell me. I don't want to hear.

[*There is an awkward pause after this explosion*]

Mabel. I think I'll go up and change my habit, Geoff.

[Geoffrey *nods, and* Mabel *goes out.* Geoffrey *after a moment goes up to* Ethel, *and lays a hand gently on her shoulder*]

Geoffrey. What is it, Ethel? Is anything the matter?

Ethel [*shaking him off fiercely*]. Please don't touch me.

Geoffrey. Something has happened. What is it?

Ethel [*savagely*]. Nothing's happened. Nothing ever does happen *here.*

[Geoffrey *tries to take her hand. She pulls it pettishly away. He slightly shrugs his shoulders. A long pause. He rises slowly and turns towards door*]

Ethel [*stopping him*]. Geoff!

Geoffrey. Yes.

[*Does not turn his head*]

Ethel. I want to break off our engagement.

Geoffrey [*swinging round, astonished, and not for a moment taking her seriously*]. My dear girl!

Ethel. I think it would be better. Better for both of us.

Geoffrey [*still rallying her*]. Might one ask why?

Ethel. For many reasons. Oh, don't let us go into all that. Just say you release me and there's an end.

Geoffrey [*more serious*]. My dear Ethel. What *is* the matter? Aren't you well?

Ethel [*impatiently*]. I'm perfectly well.

Geoffrey. I don't think you are. You look quite flushed. I wish you'd take more exercise. You'd be ever so much better.

Ethel [*goaded to frenzy by this well-meant suggestion,* Geoffrey's *panacea for all human ills*]. Geoffrey, you're simply maddening. Do please understand that I know when I'm well and when I'm ill. There's nothing whatever the matter with me. I believe you think everything in life would go right if only every one took a cold bath every morning and spent the rest of the day shooting partridges.

Geoffrey [*quite simply*]. Well, there's a lot in that, isn't there?

Ethel. Rubbish!

Geoffrey [*struck by a brilliant idea*]. It's not that silly business about the riding again, is it?

Ethel [*almost hysterical with exasperation*]. Oh, no! no! *Please* believe that I'm not a child, and that I know what I'm saying. *I want to break off our engagement.* I don't think we're suited to each other.

Geoffrey [*piqued*]. This is rather sudden, isn't it?

Ethel [*sharply*]. How do you know it's sudden?

Geoffrey. But isn't it?

Ethel. *No.* It's not.

Geoffrey [*struck by a thought*]. Ethel, has my mother —?

Ethel. Your mother has nothing whatever to do with it.

Geoffrey. She hasn't said anything?

Ethel. Your mother has been every thing that's kind and good. In fact, if it hadn't been for her I think I should have broken it off before. But I didn't want to hurt her.

[Geoffrey *rises, and paces the room up and down for a moment in thought. Then he turns to her again*]

Geoffrey. Ethel, you mustn't come to a decision like this hastily. You must take time to consider.

ETHEL. Thank you. My mind is quite made up.

GEOFFREY. Still, you might think it over for a day or two — a week, perhaps. It [*hesitates*] . . . it wouldn't be fair of me to take you at your word in this way.

ETHEL. Why not?

GEOFFREY [*hesitates*]. You might — regret it afterwards.

ETHEL [*with a short laugh*]. You're very modest.

GEOFFREY [*nettled*]. Oh, I'm not vain enough to imagine that you would find anything to regret in *me*. *I'm* a commonplace fellow enough. But there are other things which a girl has to consider in marriage, aren't there? Position. Money. If you broke off our engagement now, mightn't you regret these later on [*slight touch of bitterness*], however little you regret *me?*

ETHEL [*touched*]. Geoff, dear, I'm sorry I hurt you. I didn't mean to. You're a good fellow. Far too good for me. And I know you mean it kindly when you ask me to take time, and all that. But my mind's quite made up. Don't let's say any more about it.

GEOFFREY [*slowly, and a little sadly*]. You don't love me any more, then?

ETHEL. No. [*Decisively*] I don't love you any more Perhaps I never did love you really, Geoff. I don't know.

GEOFFREY. I loved *you*, Ethel.

ETHEL. I wonder.

GEOFFREY. You know I did.

ETHEL. You thought you did. But that's not always the same thing, is it? Many a girl takes a man's fancy for a moment. Yet people say one only loves once, don't they? [*Pause*]

GEOFFREY [*hesitating again*]. Ethel . . . I don't know how to say it. . . . You'll laugh at me again. . . . But . . . you're sure you're not doing this on *my* account?

ETHEL. On *your* account?

GEOFFREY. Yes. To spare me. Because you think I ought to marry in my own class, as Lady Remenham would say?

ETHEL. No.

GEOFFREY. Quite sure?

ETHEL [*nods*]. Quite. [*Turns away*]

GEOFFREY [*frankly puzzled*]. Then I *can't* understand it!

ETHEL [*turning on him impatiently*]. My dear Geoff, is it impossible for you to understand that I don't *want* to marry you? That if I married you I should be bored to death? That I *loathe* the life down here among your highly respectable friends? That if I had to *live* here with you I should yawn myself into my grave in six months?

GEOFFREY [*astonished*]. Don't you *like* Deynham?

ETHEL. No. I *detest* it. Oh, it's pretty enough, I suppose, and the fields are very green, and the view from Milverton Hill is much admired. And you live all alone in a great park, and you've horses and dogs, and a butler and two footmen. But that's not enough for *me*. I want life, people, *lots* of people. If I lived down here I should go blue-mouldy in three weeks. I'm town-bred, a true cockney. I want streets and shops and gas lamps. I don't want your carriages and pair. Give me a penny omnibus.

GEOFFREY. Ethel!

ETHEL. Now you're shocked. It *is* vulgar, isn't it? But *I'm* vulgar. And I'm not ashamed of it. Now you know.

[*Another pause.* GEOFFREY, *in pained surprise, ponders deeply. At last he speaks*]

GEOFFREY. It's all over, then?

ETHEL [*nodding flippantly*]. All over and done with. I surrender my claim to everything, the half of your worldly goods, of your mother's worldly goods, of your house, your park, your men-servants and maid-servants, your aristocratic relations. Don't let's forget your aristocratic relations. I surrender them all. There's my hand on it. [*Stretches it out*]

GEOFFREY [*pained*]. Don't, Ethel.

ETHEL [*with genuine surprise*]. My dear Geoff, you don't mean to say you're *sorry!* You ought to be flinging your cap in the air at regaining your liberty. Why, I believe there are tears in your eyes! Actually tears! Let me look. [*Turns his face to her*]

GEOFFREY [*pulling it away sulkily*]. You don't suppose a fellow *likes* being thrown over like this, do you?

ETHEL. Vanity, my dear Geoff. Mere vanity.

GEOFFREY [*hotly*]. It's *not!*

ETHEL [*suddenly serious*]. Geoff, do you *want* our engagement to go on? Do you *want* to marry me still? [*He turns to her impulsively*] Do you *love*

me still? [*Checks him*] No, Geoff. Think before you speak. On your honour! [Geoffrey *is silent*] There, you see! Come, dear, cheer up. It's best as it is. Give me a kiss. The last one. [*She goes to* Geoffrey *and holds up her face to be kissed. He kisses her on the forehead*] And now I'll run upstairs and tell mother. [*Laughs*] Poor mother! Won't she make a shine!

[Ethel *goes out recklessly.* Geoffrey, *left alone, looks round the room in a dazed way. Takes out cigarette-case automatically, goes to writing-table for match. Just as he is lighting cigarette* Mrs. Cassilis *enters from garden, followed a moment later by* Lady Marchmont. *He throws cigarette away unlighted*]

Mrs. Cassilis. All alone, Geoffrey?

Geoffrey. Yes, mother.

Mrs. Cassilis. Where's Ethel!

Geoffrey. Mother — Ethel's . . . [*Sees* Lady Marchmont. *Pause*] Good morning, Aunt Margaret.

Lady Marchmont. Good morning.

Mrs. Cassilis. Well, dear?

Geoffrey. Mother [*plunging into his subject*], a terrible thing has happened. Ethel was here a moment ago, and she has broken off our engagement.

Lady Marchmont. Broken it off!

Mrs. Cassilis [*immensely sympathetic*]. Broken it off, dear? Surely not?

Geoffrey. Yes.

Mrs. Cassilis. Oh, *poor* Geoffrey. [*Going to him*] Did she say why?

Geoffrey [*dully*]. Only that it had all been a mistake. She was tired of it all, and didn't like the country, and — that's all, I think.

Mrs. Cassilis [*anxious*]. My poor boy. And I thought her so happy with us. [*Laying hand caressingly on his shoulder as he sits with head bowed*] You don't think we've been to blame — *I've* been to blame — in any way, do you? Perhaps we ought to have amused her more.

Geoffrey. Not you, mother. You've always been sweet and good to her. Always. She said so.

Mrs. Cassilis. I'm glad of that, dear.

[*Enter* Mrs. Borridge, *furiously angry, followed by* Ethel, *vainly trying to detain or silence her.* Geoffrey *retreats up stage, where* Mrs. Borridge *for a moment does not notice him*]

Mrs. Borridge [*raging*]. Where's Geoff? Leave me alone, Ethel. Where's Geoff?

Ethel. He's not here, mother. And Mrs. Cassilis is. Do be quiet.

Geoffrey [*coming between them*]. I'm here. What is it, Mrs. Borridge?

Mrs. Borridge. Oh, Geoffy, what *is* this Ethel's been telling me? You haven't reely broke off your engagement, have you?

Ethel. Nonsense, mother. *I* broke it off, as I told you.

Mrs. Borridge. But you didn't mean it, dearie. It's all a mistake. Just a little tiff.

Ethel [*firmly*]. No!

Mrs. Borridge [*obstinately*]. Yes, it is. It'll blow over. You wouldn't be so unkind to poor Geoffy.

Ethel. Mother, don't be a fool. It doesn't take anybody in. Come upstairs and let's get on with our packing.

Mrs. Borridge [*stamps foot*]. Be quiet, Ethel, when I tell you. Lady Marchmont, won't *you* speak to her? Undutiful girl. I should like to *whip* her! [Ethel *turns away in despair*]

Lady Marchmont [*soothingly*]. Ah, well, dear Mrs. Borridge, perhaps young people know best about these things.

Mrs. Borridge [*excited and angry*]. Know best! know best! How should they know best? They don't know *anything*. They're as ignorant as they are uppish. [*Growing tearful*] And to think 'ow I've worked for that girl! 'Ow I've slaved for 'er, denied myself for 'er. [*Breaking down*] I did so want 'er to be respectable. I 'aven't always been respectable myself, and I know the value of it.

[*Subsides into chair, almost hysterical, and no longer realising what she is saying*]

Ethel. Oh, hush, mother!

Mrs. Borridge [*angry again*]. I won't 'ush, so there! I'm your mother, and I won't be trod on. *I* find some one to marry you — a better match than ever you'll find for yourself, miss — and this is 'ow I'm treated!

[*Begins to cry*]

Ethel [*taking her arm*]. Mother, mother, do come away.

Mrs. Borridge [*breaking down altogether*]. And now to 'ave to begin all

over again. And young men ain't so green as they used to be. Not by a long way. They're cunning most of them. They take a deal of catchin'. And I'm gettin' an old woman. Oh, she might 'ave spared me this.

Mrs. Cassilis [*almost sorry for her*]. Mrs. Borridge — Mrs. Borridge.

Mrs. Borridge [*refusing to be comforted*]. But she's no natural affection. That's what it is. She doesn't love 'er mother. She's 'eadstrong and wilful, and never paid the least attention to what I told 'er. [*Burst of tears*] But I do think she might 'ave let '*im* break it off. Then there'd 'ave been a breach of promise, and that's always something. That's what I always say to girls: "Leave *them* to break it off, dearies. And then there'll be a breach of promise *and* damages." That's if you've got something on paper. But [*fresh burst of tears*] she never *would* get anything on paper. She never paid the least regard to her old mother. She's an undutiful girl, and that's 'ow it is.

[*Goes off into incoherent sobs*]

Butler. Lady Remenham.

Mrs. Cassilis [*rising hastily*]. The drawing-room, Watson.

[*She is, however, too late to stop* Watson *from showing in* Lady Remenham]

Lady Remenham [*sailing in, with breezy cheerfulness*]. How do you do, Adelaide? How do you do, Margaret? I've just driven Algernon to the station, and I thought I'd leave this for you as I passed. [*Gives book*]

Mrs. Borridge. She's an undutiful daughter. That's what she is.

[*Snorting and sobbing*]

Lady Remenham [*perceiving for the first time that something unusual is going on*]. Eh?

Mrs. Cassilis. Mrs. Borridge is not quite herself just now. Dear Ethel has decided that she does not wish to continue her engagement to my son, and Mrs. Borridge has only just heard the news.

Lady Remenham [*scarcely able to believe her ears*]. Not wish ——!

Mrs. Cassilis [*hastily, checking her*]. No. This has naturally upset us all very much. It was so very sudden.

Lady Remenham. Well, I must say ——

[*Luckily she does not do so, but takes refuge in silence*]

Mrs. Borridge [*burst of grief*]. Oh, why didn't she get something on paper? Letters is best. Men are that slippy! I always told her to get something on paper. [*Breaks down completely*]

Ethel. Come away, mother. [*Takes her firmly by the arm*] Will you please order the carriage, Mrs. Cassilis?

[*Leads* Mrs. Borridge *off, sobbing and gulping to the last*]

Lady Remenham [*sitting down, with a triumphant expression on her amiable countenance*]. Geoffrey, will you tell the coachman to drive round to the stables? *I* shall stay to luncheon.

[*It is impossible adequately to represent the tone in which* Lady Remenham *announces this intention. It is that of a victorious general occupying the field, from which he has beaten the enemy with bag and baggage. Luckily,* Geoffrey *is too depressed to notice anything. He goes out without a word — and the curtain falls*]

THE MADRAS HOUSE

(1910)

By Granville Barker

GRANVILLE BARKER

There are three factors that confronted the British stage before the War: realism, which was about to give way before imagination and spirituality; the desire for a repertory or National Theatre; and George Bernard Shaw. The renaissance has threatened to leave Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones as far in the rear as they, with their "Tanqueray", and "Ebbsmith", and "Saints and Sinners", left Tom Robertson with "Caste."

First and foremost, the young coterie, that attracted the attention of London theatre-goers during the past two decades, is a literary group, — intent on bridging the gap that, for so long a time, separated the stage and literature. Their plays are generally published before or simultaneously with production. The dialogue is detailed and fluent; the stage directions have a literary character reflective of the style of the psychological novelist. These men have been consciously working in a field having a history which began with the early attempts to introduce Ibsen to a not too willing English public. The British dramatist of to-day is the product of a conscious movement for the betterment of the British stage.

After Edmund Gosse and William Archer had emphatically pointed to Ibsen as the coming man in the theatre, critics were prompted to plead for the "drama of ideas." Managers had only just ceased looking askance at the feminism of Pinero, who was being accepted by the English public. Jones was struggling to give the minister a place on the stage, and to win for the English dramatist the right to discuss any topic, unhampered by the censor. Ibsen, respecter of no nationality, put a torpedo beneath the English ark. "A Doll's House" was presented in 1889.

George Bernard Shaw, then only a Fabian, a vegetarian, an art and dramatic critic, and a novelist, heard the percussion, and it gave him a new form of creative impulse. J. T. Grein, until then only a dramatic critic interested in the careers of Pinero and Jones, became owner of the Independent Theatre, and thereafter he began in earnest the experimental movement which led to Galsworthy, Masefield, and Barker.

What was it that Grein did? With scarcely enough money to open a bank account, and with the example of Antoine, in Paris, before him, he produced "Ghosts" for the members of his Independent Society. This was in 1891. In the writing of this play, Ibsen had seared his own soul; no wonder torrents of abuse fell upon Grein and upon his theatre! But behind him stood Meredith, Hardy, Pinero, Jones, and Frank Harris. Moreover, he was on the eve of a great discovery. In 1893, Grein captured "Widower's Houses", the first play by George Bernard Shaw. The Independent Theatre ceased to be, however, in 1897. The experiment was useful; it proved that a cultural theatre has a specialized audience, and that such a theatre can hardly be self-supporting.

Such audiences as Grein appealed to needed to be organized. In 1899, the Stage Society — the first concerted attempt to institute a repertory theatre in

London — was founded. It did not succeed in its endeavour, but it did familiarize British play-goers with the works of Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Hauptmann, Gorky, Brieux, and Sudermann. Moreover, it threw a spotlight upon the foolish position of the English censor. For, through the unprofessional character of the Stage Society, its members were able to defy the Reader of Plays, presenting "Monna Vanna", "Mrs. Warren's Profession", and other dramas which would have been refused a license in the regular playhouse. What is more, the Stage Society fostered the strength of the dramatists of the English dramatic renaissance. In every way it defied English convention which interfered with the advancement of ideas and of art. It even shocked the public by giving its plays on Sunday.

Among the members of the Stage Society were Shaw, St. John Hankin, and Barker. Of the three, Shaw may be considered the leader in the next step of the dramatic evolution. He propounded the rules, and largely established the form, of the literary drama that flourishes in England to-day.

The Stage Society had as its definite object:

> To promote and encourage dramatic art; to serve as an experimental theatre; to provide such an organization as shall be capable of dealing with any opportunities that may present themselves or be created for the establishment in London of a Repertory Theatre.

Though it accomplished much by these performances, it has been surpassed by other organizations more potent in the independent and progressive development of the British dramatist. With the advent of the Court Theatre, in 1904, came the almost conscious declaration of the new dramatists to follow the banner of realism. Fresh from producing plays for the Stage Society, Granville Barker went over to the Court Theatre, then under the management of J. H. Leigh, and consented to assist in the mounting and presentation of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona", provided Vedrenne would aid him in giving six matinees of Shaw's "Candida." From this proposal and acceptance there came into being the Vedrenne-Barker alliance. On April 26, 1904, the playhouse of the "New Drama" was launched, pledged, as its historian, Desmond MacCarthy, declares, to the exploitation of *truth* rather than of *effect*. The Court Theatre had excellent plays, of wide scope and variety — plays that never would have found encouragement through ordinary theatrical channels. It ranged foreign dramatists alongside of the "New Drama" of England. It even popularized Greek drama, with the able assistance of Professor Gilbert Murray. Within its limitations, of which a dependence upon Shaw was one, it was a vindication of the art theatre, and for three years it paid its way. It was followed, in the English striving for an endowed theatre, by the Frohman repertory experiment, in which Shaw, Barrie, Galsworthy, Masefield, Barker, and others, had their share.

The policy of the Court Theatre did not materially depart from that of the Stage Society. It was, however, for the public rather than for members of a club organization, and its performances were of a higher artistic quality.

In the fall of 1907, the movement was transferred to the Savoy Theatre, where Shaw, Galsworthy, and Euripides were the attractions. But the house was large, and some of the intimacy of the Court Theatre was lost. This, and the refusal of the censor to license Barker's "Waste", caused the final dissolution of the Vedrenne-Barker combination. The experiment proved two things: first, that the literary

drama is an intimate drama, relying for its appreciation on the sympathy of a special audience; second, that its progressiveness had to fight against the censor, showing the latter to be an anachronism, nowhere better realized than in the minutes of a meeting between the Joint Select Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons on stage plays, wherein the leading dramatists and actors gave their evidence as to the pernicious effect of censorship. This report was published on November 2, 1909.

Such is the history of the movement which gave rise to, and fostered, the "New Drama" in England. It shows a breaking away from the Victorian régime. It points to a definite continental influence. It was to result in further brilliant experiments on the part of Granville Barker as a stage producer. Throughout this theatrical unrest, personality has had a large opportunity to assert itself. There have been sponsors for ideas, as well as for dramatists. Had it not been for Lugné-Poë, Maeterlinck's marionette plays would have lacked appreciation in France. Ibsen was nurtured in England by Grein, on the one hand, and through the enthusiasm of such players as Miss Janet Achurch and Mr. Charles Carrington.

It is Shaw — a school unto himself — who has made it possible for Galsworthy, Masefield, Barker, and McEvoy to come to the fore. And they have come with no concessions; each of them with character to draw and with something to say. These men, working for the "New Drama", have stated in definite terms what that "New Drama" is. Galsworthy writes:

> Our drama is renascent, and nothing will stop its growth. It is not renascent because this or that man is writing, but because of a new spirit . . . .

Shaw has declared that after all the "New Drama" is nothing more than a debate for the betterment of life in general, and that George Bernard Shaw is the only debater. What he cannot put into the three hours traffic of his thesis play, he puts into his preface. Granville Barker believes that the future of the "New Drama" is dependent on endowment. St. John Hankin wrote frankly that the "New Drama", as represented by Galsworthy, Masefield, and himself, alone would have brought the Court Theatre to immediate financial ruin; but he added:

> Art, and especially dramatic art, never is and never can be "independent" in any real sense. The drama depends, and must always depend, upon its audiences, upon its "patrons" in fact. . . . And the only difference between the commercial theatre and the endowed theatre is that whereas the latter depends for its existence on one patron, the former depends upon many. . . .

And in substance he continued further: A patron can give the public the opportunity of discovering whether or not they like a play. They can have time to discover whether they like it. The fatal thing about the London Theatre as it is organized to-day is that plays must succeed at once.

There are two channels for the British drama to pass through, said Galsworthy, writing before the Great War, the first that of naturalism, which

> to be vital . . . is in every respect as dependent on imagination, construction, selection, and elimination — the main laws of artistry — as ever was the romantic or rhapsodic play;

the second, a poetic prose drama,

> emotionalizing us by its diversity and purity of form and invention, . . . whose province will be to disclose the elemental soul of man and the forces of Nature, not perhaps as the old tragedies disclosed them, not necessarily in the epic mood, but always with beauty and in the spirit of discovery.

Read Shaw's preface to the Brieux plays, and you will find what he means by interpreting life; for, according to him, it is the business of every dramatist, not alone of Brieux,

> to pick out the significant incidents from the chaos of daily happenings and arrange them so that their relation to one another becomes significant, thus changing us from bewildered spectators of a monstrous confusion to men intelligently conscious of the world and its destinies.

Granville Barker has figured prominently in the history of the English stage, as just outlined. Like the rest of the new dramatists, he is after truth also; but his literary quality dominates, and makes subservient, the drama elements in his plays. This is strange, since he is one of the British playwrights who has had most to do with the stage as an actor and as a manager. His best play, from the standpoint of a complete story, is "The Voysey Inheritance" (1905), quite as full of detail as his other plays, but complete in the sense that it finishes one phase of the argument: that business dishonesty may be made to seem honest. In another sense — the dramatic one — the play ends just when we are most anxious to know what the son will do with his terrible inheritance.

As a disciple of Shaw, Barker carries his stage directions and his minuteness of stage description to the point which links the modern thesis play with the realistic novel. He excels in this method of analysis. He is able, through his stage directions, as well as through his dialogue, to give one a complete sense of the vitality of certain slices of British life. Without class distinction to work upon, Barker, previous to the War, would have been at a loss to know what to write about. So clever is he in his observation, so incisive in his satire, that he could hold the interest while presenting several phases of the same subject, as in "The Madras House" (1910). He is of that school of dramatists represented by Charles McEvoy, whose "David Ballard" (1907) is a striking example of the middle-class drama which has come out of this realistic group of playwrights.

Barker has not caught from Shaw the full unity of the thesis plot. His plays are photographic, human likenesses, caught with an exceptionally fine lens. So English is he in his observation and in his interest, that such a play as "Waste" (1907) loses much of its meaning, by reason of the necessity, on the part of the audience, to know fully the political conditions treated, before being able to understand the trend of the plot.

In his play writing, he has been as experimental as he has been in every phase of interest which has attracted him to the theatre. One is inclined to believe that in "Prunella" Laurence Housman's touch of collaboration was the poetic, and Barker's the constructive. In "Anatol", one is able to note how truly a translator or an adapter may accomplish his task, by the deft way in which Barker was able to catch the effervescent spirit of Schnitzler in his episodic adventures of *Anatol*.

One must, in order to measure Barker's true position, identify him with the experimental side of the English stage. As an actor, he was able to learn fully the

essentials of his art in the various companies with which he identified himself, from 1891 until he began producing. He toured with Ben Greet in Shakespeare. He played with the Elizabethan Stage Society in Shakespeare. Then his career became identified with that of the experimental theatre of England. He developed minutely under the kindly inspiration of Shaw, becoming a Fabian Socialist, and there is no doubt that his type of mind might have been other than it was, had he not been influenced by the arch-dramatist of the thesis school. That influence is felt in "Waste" more than in any of his other dramas.

The experimental idea naturally turned Barker's thoughts toward the best means of supporting the "New Drama", and he at first became interested in the establishment of a National Theatre — which interest was manifest in his collaboration with William Archer in a volume, "Schemes and Estimates for a National Theatre." So thoroughly was he identified with the idea that when, in America, the project for a National Theatre was put into practical execution, Barker was called from England to consider the advisability of assuming the directorship. His ideas were so fixed regarding what the experiment should be, his experience at the Court Theatre had so well determined him in his own mind that the realistic drama was an intimate drama, that he declined to come to America at that time, because of the vastness of the building, and the limitations put upon him by a fashionable Board of Directors.

He did come to America, however, in 1915, having by this time established a sensational reputation in England for certain innovations in his managerial preparations of Shakespeare — innovations directly influenced by the new stagecraft, whose prophet was Gordon Craig, and whose most eminent disciples were Reinhardt and Stanislovsky. His defiance of tradition in the mounting of Shakespeare brought a freshness to the text which exhibited the fluent imaginative quality of Mr. Barker's mind — a fluency not fostered in the plays by which he is known as a playwright. But in his rôle as a director of Greek drama — even though Mr. Barker was handicapped by the incongruous adjustments of college stadia to the proportions of Greek tragedy, he vivified the Attic drama, and, through his untiring energy and quick grasp of decorative possibilities, his ventures in Sophoclean and Euripidean dramas are memorable in the history of the American theatre.

Mr. Barker is, however, essentially a man interested in the literary aspect of the drama rather than in theatrical management. At the outbreak of the War he had reached that point where, having proven to himself certain characteristics about the physical side of the theatre, and having convinced his critics that he was all on the side of innovation, rather than of tradition, Barker was about to return to his play writing. Whether or not his recent one-act plays were written since August, 1914, matters little in the evolution of Barker. The great conflict has had its effect upon him. It has made him look deeper into phases of human life, and has added a touch of compassion to his satire. This change was evident in a short story, reflective of his impressions of America, called "Souls on Fifth."

In an article, written by Barker, on "A Theatre of New Phases", he discusses the requirements of the normal theatre, and emphasizes those handicaps which have prevented such a theatre from coming into existence. Whatever he has said about theatrical conditions has been listened to with earnestness. He has done more to keep the British public stirred up to the importance of the theatre as a social institution than any one of the new dramatists, outside of Shaw. When his

"Waste" was censored by the Reader of Plays, the discussion which followed resulted in the Parliamentary Joint Committee for the investigation of the censor.

We have selected "The Madras House", which was first performed at the Charles Frohman Repertory Theatre, the Duke of York's, March 9, 1910, because of its true character portrayal, and because it emphasizes just that quality which places Barker among the intellectuals, rather than among the theatrical playwrights. He raises the commonplace to an unusual plane. He almost revels in the repetition of the same psychological states under varied conditions. He is individualistic in his identification of manner with person. Though in "The Madras House" one might accuse him of being episodic, his episodes have direct bearing, one upon another, and present a unity which is one of the cleverest qualities in the construction of this piece. Max Beerbohm speaks of Barker's lust for observation, and says that, in witnessing this play, one should leave at the end of the "magnificent" third act, for to him, in the fourth act, "the flame burns in its socket and dimly."

But though, in "The Madras House", Barker gives us the thesis form, his dialogue being of the debatable quality, and though he appears to remain faithful to his theme, at the end one is a little dissatisfied with the inconclusiveness of the outcome. He takes a group and he leaves them with their middle class souls exactly where he found them. The only thing he does is to twirl the souls on the axis of his art for our observation. Nevertheless, one can realize the possibilities in "The Madras House" for an evening of sheer enjoyment of the small realities in life which he has used with telling effect and interest.

THE MADRAS HOUSE

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

By GRANVILLE BARKER

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

"The Madras House" was produced at the Duke of York's Theatre (Mr. Charles Frohman's Repertory Theatre), on the evening of March 9th, 1910.

Henry Huxtable	*Mr. E. W. Garden*
Katherine Huxtable	*Miss Florence Haydon*
Laura Huxtable	*Miss Ada Marius*
Minnie Huxtable	*Miss Elizabeth Chesney*
Clara Huxtable	*Miss Joy Chatwin*
Julia Huxtable	*Miss Victoria Addison*
Emma Huxtable	*Miss Sybil Thorndike*
Jane Huxtable	*Miss Nell Carter*
Major Hippisly Thomas	*Mr. Charles Bryant*
Philip Madras	*Mr. Dennis Eadie*
Jessica Madras	*Miss Fay Davis*
Constantine Madras	*Mr. Sydney Valentine*
Amelia Madras	*Miss May Whitty*
Eustace Perrin State	*Mr. Arthur Whitby*
Marion Yates	*Miss Mary Jerrold*
Mr. Brigstock	*Mr. Lewis Casson*
Mrs. Brigstock	*Miss Mary Barton*
Miss Chancellor	*Miss Geraldine Olliffe*
Mr. Windlesham	*Mr. Charles Maude*
Mr. Belhaven	*Mr. Donald Calthorp*
Three Mannequins	*Miss Asta Fleming* *Miss Mair Vaughan* *Miss Mary Brenda*
A Maid at Denmark Hill	*Miss Millie Emden*
A Maid at Phillimore Gardens	*Miss Evangeline Hilliard*

THE MADRAS HOUSE

ACT I

The HUXTABLES *live at Denmark Hill, for* MR. HUXTABLE *is the surviving partner in the well-known Peckham drapery establishment of Roberts & Huxtable, and the situation, besides being salubrious, is therefore convenient. It is a new house.* MR. HUXTABLE *bought it half finished, so that the interior might be to his liking; its exterior the builder said one might describe as of a Free Queen Anne Treatment; to which* MR. HUXTABLE *rejoined, after blinking at the red brick spotted with stone ornament, that After all it was inside they were going to live, you know.*

Through the stained, grained front door, rattling with coloured glass, one reaches the hall, needlessly narrow, needlessly dark, but with its black and white tessellated pavement making for cleanliness. On the left is the stained and grained staircase, with its Brussels carpet and twisted brass stair rods, on the right the drawing-room. The drawing-room can hardly be said to express the personality of MR. HUXTABLE. *The foundations of its furnishings are in the taste of* MRS. HUXTABLE. *For fifteen years or so additions to this family museum have been disputed into their place by the six* MISS HUXTABLES: LAURA *(aged thirty-nine),* MINNIE, CLARA, JULIA, EMMA, JANE *(aged twenty-six). The rosewood cabinets, the picture from some Academy of the early Seventies, entitled In Ye Olden Time (this was a wedding present, most likely), the gilt clock, which is a Shakespeare, narrow-headed, but with a masterly pair of legs, propped pensively against a dial and enshrined beneath a dome of glass, another wedding present. These were the treasures of* MRS. HUXTABLE'S *first drawing-room, her solace in the dull post-honeymoon days. She was the daughter of a city merchant, wholesale as against her husband's retail; but even in the Seventies retail was lifting its head. It was considered, though, that* KATHERINE TOMBS *conferred some distinction upon young* HARRY HUXTABLE *by marrying him, and even now, as a portly lady nearing sixty, she figures by the rustle of her dress, the measure of her mellow voice, with its carefully chosen phrases, for the dignity of the household.*

The difference between one MISS HUXTABLE *and another is, to a casual eye, the difference between one lead pencil and another, as these lie upon one's table, after some weeks' use; a matter of length, of sharpening, of wear.* LAURA'S *distinction lies in her being the housekeeper; it is a solid power, that of ordering the dinner. She is very silent. While her sisters are silent with strangers, she is silent with her sisters. She doesn't seem to read much, either; one hopes she dreams, if only of wild adventures with a new carpet-sweeper. When there was some family bitterness as to whether the fireplace, in summer, should hold ferns or a Chinese umbrella, it was* LAURA'S *opinion that an umbrella gathers less dust, which carried the day.* MINNIE *and* CLARA *are inclined to religion; not sentimentally; works are a good second with them to faith. They have veered, though, lately, from district visiting to an interest in Missions — missions to Poplar or China (one is almost as far as the other); good works, the results of which they cannot see. Happily, they forbear to ask why this proves the more soul-satisfying sort.*

JULIA *started life — that is to say, left school — as a genius. The head mistress had had two or three years of such dull girls that really she could not resist this excitement. Watercolour sketches were the medium. So* JULIA *was dressed in brown velveteen, and sent to an art school, where they wouldn't let her do watercolour drawing at all. And in two years she learnt enough about the trade of an artist not ever to want to do those watercolour drawings again.* JULIA *is now over thirty, and very unhappy. Three of her watercolours (early masterpieces) hang on the drawing-room wall. They shame her, but her mother won't have them taken down. On a holiday she'll be off now and then for a solitary day's sketching, and as she tears up the vain attempt to put on paper the things she has learnt to see, she sometimes cries. It was* JULIA, EMMA *and* JANE *who, some years ago, conspired to present their mother with that intensely conspicuous cosy corner. A cosy corner is apparently a device for making a corner just what the very nature of a corner should forbid it to be. They beggared themselves; but one wishes that* MR. HUXTABLE *were more lavish with his dress allowances, then they might at least have afforded something not quite so hideous.*

EMMA, *having* JULIA *in mind, has run rather to coats and skirts and common sense. She would have been a success in an office, and worth, perhaps, thirty shillings a week. But the* HUXTABLES *don't want another thirty shillings a week, and this gift, such as it is, has been wasted, so that* EMMA *runs also to a brusque temper.*

JANE *is meekly enough a little wild.* MRS. HUXTABLE'S *power of applying the brake of good breeding, strong enough over five daughters, waned at the sixth attempt in twelve years, and* JANE *has actually got herself proposed to twice by not quite desirable young men. Now the fact that she was old enough to be proposed to at all came as something of a shock to the family. Birthdays pass, their celebration growing less emphatic. No one likes to believe that the years are passing; even the birthday's owner, least able to escape its significance, laughs, and then changes the subject. So the* MISS HUXTABLES *never openly asked each other what the marriage of the youngest of them might imply; perhaps they never even asked themselves. Besides,* JANE *didn't marry. But if she does, unless, perhaps, she runs away to do it, there will be heart searchings, at least.* MR. HUXTABLE *asked, though, and,* MRS. HUXTABLE'S *answer — given early one morning, before the hot water came — scarcely satisfied him. "For,"* said MR. HUXTABLE, *"if the girls don't marry some day, what are they to do! It's not as if they had to go into the shop." "No, thank Heaven!" said* MRS. HUXTABLE.

Since his illness MR. HUXTABLE *has taken to asking questions — of anybody and about anything; of himself oftenest of all. But for that illness he would have been a conventional enough type of successful shopkeeper, coarsely fed, whiskered, podgy. But eighteen months' nursing and dieting and removal from the world seem to have brought a gentleness to his voice, a spark of humour to his eye, a childishness to his little bursts of temper — they have added, in fact, a wistfulness which makes him rather a loveable old buffer on the whole.*

This is a Sunday morning, a bright day in October. The family are still at church, and the drawing-room is empty. The door opens, and the parlour-maid — much becapped and aproned — shews in PHILIP MADRAS *and his friend,* MAJOR HIPPISLY THOMAS. THOMAS, *long legged and deliberate, moves across the room to the big French windows, which open onto a balcony and look down on the garden and to many gardens beyond.* THOMAS *is a good fellow.*

PHILIP MADRAS *is more complex than that. To begin with, it is obvious he is not wholly English. A certain likeness of figure, the keenness and colour of his voice, and a liking for metaphysical turns of speech, shew an Eastern origin, perhaps. He is kind in manner, but rather cold, capable of that least English of dispositions — intellectual passion. He is about thirty-five, a year or two*

younger than his friend. The parlour-maid has secured MAJOR THOMAS'S *hat, and stands clutching it. As* PHILIP *passes her into the room he asks . . .*

PHILIP. About how long?

THE MAID. In just a few minutes now, I should say, sir. Oh, I beg pardon, does it appen to be the third Sunday in the month?

PHILIP. I don't know. Tommy, does it?

THOMAS [*from the window*]. Don't ask me. Well, I suppose I can tell you.

[*And he vaguely fishes for his diary*]

THE MAID. No, I don't think it does, sir. Because then some of them stop for the Oly Communion, and that may make them late for dinner, but I don't think it is, sir.

[*She backs through the door, entangling the hat in the handle*]

PHILIP. Is my mother still staying here?

THE MAID. Mrs. Madras, sir? Yes, sir.

[*Then having disentangled the hat, the parlour-maid vanishes.* PHILIP *thereupon plunges swiftly into what must be an interrupted argument*]

PHILIP. Well, my dear Tommy, what are the two most important things in a man's character? His attitude towards money and his attitude towards women.

THOMAS [*ponderously slowing him up*]. Yes, you're full up with moral precepts. Why behave about money as if it didn't exist? I never said don't join the County Council.

PHILIP [*deliberately, but in a breath*]. It is quite impossible for any decent man to walk with his eyes open from Waterloo to Denmark Hill on a Sunday morning without wishing me to stand for the County Council.

[THOMAS *entrenches himself on a sofa*]

THOMAS. You've got what I call the Reformer's mind. I shouldn't cultivate it, Phil. It makes a man unhappy and discontented, not with himself, but with other people, mark you . . . so it makes him conceited, and puts him out of condition both ways. Don't you get to imagine you can make this country better by tidying it up.

PHILIP [*whimsically*]. But I'm very interested in England, Tommy.

THOMAS [*not without some answering humour*]. We all are. But we don't all need to go about saying so. Even I can be interested in England, I suppose, though I have had to chuck the Army and take to business to earn bread and treacle for a wife and four children . . . and not a bad thing for me, either. I tell you if every chap would look after himself and his family, and lead a godly, righteous and sober life — I'm sorry, but it is Sunday — England would get on a damn sight better than it will with all your interference.

[*He leans back.* PHILIP'S *eyes fix themselves on some great distance*]

PHILIP. It's a muddled country. One's first instinct is to be rhetorical about it . . . to write poetry and relieve one's feelings. I once thought I might be self-sacrificing — give my goods to the poor, and go slumming — keeping my immortal soul superior still. There's something wrong with a world, Tommy, in which it takes a man like me all his time to find out that it's bread people want, and not either cake or crumbs.

THOMAS. There's something wrong with a man while he will think of other people as if they were ants on an ant heap.

PHILIP [*relaxing to a smile*]. Tommy, that's perfectly true. I like having a good talk with you: sooner or later you always say one sensible thing.

THOMAS. Thank you; you're damn polite. And, as usual, we've got right off the point.

PHILIP. The art of conversation!

THOMAS [*shying at the easy epigram*]. Go on six County Councils, if you like. But why chuck up seven hundred a year and a directorship, if State wants you to keep 'em? And you could have double or more, and manage the place, if you'd ask for it.

PHILIP [*almost venomously*]. Tommy, I loathe the Madras House. State may buy it, and do what he likes with it.

[JULIA *and* LAURA *arrive. They are the first from Church. Sunday frocks, Sunday hats, best gloves, umbrellas and prayer books*]

JULIA. Oh, what a surprise!

PHILIP. Yes, we walked down. Ah, you don't know . . . Let me introduce Major Hippisly Thomas . . . my cousin, Miss Julia Huxtable . . . and Miss Huxtable.

JULIA. How do you do?

THOMAS. How do you do?

LAURA. How do you do?

JULIA. Have you come to see Aunt Amy?

PHILIP. No, your father.

JULIA. He's walking back with her. They'll be last, I'm afraid.

LAURA. Will you stay to dinner?

PHILIP. No, I think not.

LAURA. I'd better tell them you won't. Perhaps they'll be laying for you.

[LAURA *goes out, decorously avoiding a collision with* EMMA, *who, panoplied as the others, comes in at the same moment*]

PHILIP. Hullo, Emma!

EMMA. Well, what a surprise!

PHILIP. You don't know . . . Major Hippisly Thomas . . . Miss Emma Huxtable.

THOMAS. How do you do?

EMMA. How do you do? Will you stay to dinner?

PHILIP. No, we can't. [*That formula again completed, he varies his explanation*] I've just brought Thomas a Sunday morning walk to help me tell Uncle Henry a bit of news. My father will be back in England to-morrow.

EMMA [*with a round mouth*]. Oh!

JULIA. It's a beautiful morning for a walk, isn't it?

THOMAS. Wonderful for October.

[*These two look first at each other, and then out of the window.* EMMA *gazes quizzically at* PHILIP]

EMMA. I think he knows.

PHILIP. He sort of knows.

EMMA. Why are you being odd, Philip?

[PHILIP *is more hail-fellow-well-met with* EMMA *than with the others*]

PHILIP. Emma . . . I have enticed a comparative stranger to be present so that your father and mother cannot, in decency, begin to fight the family battle over again with me. I know it's very cunning, but we did want a walk. Besides, there's a meeting to-morrow. . . .

[JANE *peeps through the door*]

JANE. You? Mother!

[*She has turned to the hall, and from the hall comes* MRS. HUXTABLE'S *rotund voice,* "*Yes, Jane!*"]

JANE. Cousin Philip!

[MRS. HUXTABLE *sails in, and superbly compresses every family greeting into one*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. What a surprise! Will you stay to dinner?

EMMA [*alive to a certain redundancy*]. No, Mother, they can't.

PHILIP. May I introduce my friend . . . Major Hippisly Thomas . . . my aunt, Mrs. Huxtable.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*stately and gracious*]. How do you do, Major Thomas?

PHILIP. Thomas is Mr. Eustace State's London manager.

THOMAS. How do you do?

[MRS. HUXTABLE *takes an armchair with the air of one mounting a throne, and from that vantage point begins polite conversation Her daughters distribute themselves, so do* PHILIP *and* HIPPISLY THOMAS]

MRS. HUXTABLE. Not in the Army, then, Major Thomas?

THOMAS. I was in the Army.

EMMA. Jessica quite well, Philip?

PHILIP. Yes, thanks.

EMMA. And Mildred?

PHILIP. I think so. She's back at school.

MRS. HUXTABLE. A wonderfully warm autumn, is it not?

THOMAS. Quite.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Do you know Denmark Hill well?

THOMAS. Not well.

MRS. HUXTABLE. We have always lived here. I consider it healthy. But London is a healthy place, I think. Oh, I beg your pardon . . . my daughter Jane.

JANE. How do you do?

[*They shake hands with ceremony.* EMMA, *in a mind to liven things up, goes to the window*]

EMMA. We've quite a good garden, that's one thing.

THOMAS [*not wholly innocent of an attempt to escape from his hostess, makes for the window, too*]. I noticed it. I am keen on gardens.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*her attention distracted by* JULIA'S *making for the door*]. Julia, where are you going?

JULIA. To take my things off, Mother.

[JULIA *departs. When they were quite little girls* MRS. HUXTABLE *always did ask her daughters where they were going when they left the room, and where they had been when they entered it, and she has never dropped the habit. They resent it only by the extreme patience of their replies*]

EMMA [*entertainingly*]. That's the Crystal Palace.

THOMAS. Is it?

[*They both peer appreciatively at that famous landmark. In the Crystal Palace and the sunset the inhabitants of Denmark Hill have acquired almost proprietary interest. Then* MRS. HUXTABLE *speaks to her nephew with a sudden severity*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. Philip, I don't consider your mother's health is at all the thing.

PHILIP [*amicably*]. It never is, Aunt Kate.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*admitting the justice of the retort*]. That's true.

PHILIP. Uncle Henry keeps better, I think.

MRS. HUXTABLE. He's well enough now. I have had a slight cold. Is it true that your father may appear in England again?

PHILIP. Yes, he has only been on the Continent. He arrives to-morrow.

MRS. HUXTABLE. I'm sorry.

JANE. Mother!

[MRS. HUXTABLE *has launched this with such redoubled severity that* JANE *had to protest. However, at this moment arrives* MR. HUXTABLE *himself, one glad smile*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Ah, Phil . . . I ad an idea you might come over. You'll stay to dinner. Jane, tell your aunt . . . she's taking er bonnet off.

[JANE *obeys. He sights on the balcony* MAJOR THOMAS'S *back*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Who's that outside?

PHILIP. Hippisly Thomas. We wanted a walk; we can't stay.

MR. HUXTABLE. Oh!

MRS. HUXTABLE. Have you come on business?

PHILIP. Well . . .

MRS. HUXTABLE. On Sunday?

PHILIP. Not exactly.

[*She shakes her head, gravely deprecating.* THOMAS *comes from the balcony*]

MR. HUXTABLE. How are you?

THOMAS. How are y o u?

MR. HUXTABLE. Fine morning, isn't it? Nice prospect, this . . . see the Crystal Palace?

[*While* THOMAS *turns, with perfect politeness, to view again this phenomenon,* PHILIP *pacifies his aunt*]

PHILIP. You see, Aunt Katherine, to-morrow afternoon we have the first real conference with this Mr. State about buying up the two firms, and my father is passing through England again to attend it.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Of course, Philip, if it's business, I know nothing about it. But is it suggested that your uncle should attend, too?

[*Her voice has found a new gravity.* PHILIP *becomes very airy; so does* MR. HUXTABLE, *who comes back to rejoin the conversation*]

PHILIP. My dear aunt, naturally.

MR. HUXTABLE. What's this?

MRS. HUXTABLE [*the one word expressing volumes*]. Constantine.

MR. HUXTABLE [*with elaborate innocence*]. That's definite now, is it?

MRS. HUXTABLE. You dropped a hint last night, Henry.

MR. HUXTABLE. I dessay. I dessay I did. [*His eye shifts guiltily*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. Quite out of the question, it seems to me.

[JANE *comes back*]

JANE. Aunt Mary's coming.

MR. HUXTABLE [*genial again*]. Oh! My daughter Jane . . . Major Thomas, Major Hippisly Thomas.

JANE [*with discretion*]. Yes, Father.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*tactfully*]. You are naturally not aware, Major Thomas, that for family reasons, into which we need not go, Mr. Huxtable has not spoken to his brother-in-law for a number of years.

[PHILIP'S *eye meets* THOMAS'S *in comic agony. But* MR. HUXTABLE, *too, plunges delightedly into the forbidden subject*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Thirty years, very near. Wonderful, isn't it? Interested in the same business. Wasn't easy to keep it up.

THOMAS. I had heard.

MR. HUXTABLE. Oh, yes, notorious.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*in reprobation*]. And well it may be, Henry.

[MRS. MADRAS *comes in. It is evident that* PHILIP *is his father's son. He would seem so wholly but for that touch of "self worship which is often self mistrust"; his mother's gift, appearing nowadays less loveably in her as a sort of querulous assertion of her rights and wrongs against the troubles which have been too strong for her. She is a pale old lady, shrunk a little, the life gone out of her*]

MRS. HUXTABLE [*some severity remaining*]. Amy, your husband is in England again.

[PHILIP *presents a filial cheek. It is kissed*]

PHILIP. How are you, Mother?

MR. HUXTABLE [*sotto voce*]. Oh, tact, Katherine, tact!

PHILIP. Perhaps you remember Reggie Thomas?

THOMAS. I was at Marlborough with Philip, Mrs. Madras.

MRS. MADRAS. Yes. Is he, Katherine?

[*Having given* THOMAS *a limp hand, and her sister this coldest of responses, she finds her way to a sofa, where she sits silent, thinking to herself.* MRS. HUXTABLE *keeps majestic hold upon her subject*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. I am utterly unable to see, Philip, why your uncle should break through his rule now.

MR. HUXTABLE. There you are, Phil!

PHILIP. Of course it is quite for Uncle Henry to decide.

MR. HUXTABLE. Naturally . . . naturally.

[*Still he has an appealing eye on* PHILIP, *who obliges him*]

PHILIP. But since Mr. State's offer may not be only for the Madras House, but Roberts and Huxtable into the bargain . . . if the two principal proprietors can't meet him round a table to settle the matter . . .

THOMAS [*ponderously diplomatic*]. Yes . . . a little awkward . . . if I may say so . . . as Mr. State's representative, Mrs. Huxtable.

MRS. HUXTABLE. You don't think, do you, Major Thomas, that any amount of awkwardness should induce us to pass over wicked conduct?

[*This reduces the assembly to such a shamed silence that poor* MR. HUXTABLE *can only add* —]

MR. HUXTABLE. Oh, talk of something else . . . talk of something else.

[*After a moment* MRS. MADRAS's *pale voice steals in, as she turns to her son*]

MRS. MADRAS. When did you hear from your father?

PHILIP. A letter from Marienbad two or three days ago, and a telegram yesterday morning.

[MRS. HUXTABLE, *with a hostess's authority, now restores a polite and easy tone to the conversation*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. And have you left the Army long, Major Thomas?

THOMAS. Four years.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Now what made you take to the Drapery Trade?

PHILIP [*very explanatory*]. Mr. State is an American financier, Aunt Kitty, who has bought up Burrow's, the big mantle place in the city, and is about to buy us up, too, perhaps.

MRS. HUXTABLE. We are not in difficulties, I hope.

PHILIP. Oh, no.

MRS. HUXTABLE. No. No doubt Henry would have told me if we had been.

[*As she thus gracefully dismisses the subject there appear up the steps and along the balcony the last arrivals from Church,* MINNIE *and* CLARA. *The male part of the company unsettles itself*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Ullo! Where have you been?

MINNIE. We went for a walk.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*in apparently deep surprise*]. A walk, Minnie! Where to?

MINNIE. Just the long way home. We thought we'd have time.

CLARA. Did you notice what a short sermon?

MR. HUXTABLE. Oh, may I . . . My daughter Clara . . . Major Ippisly Thomas. My daughter Minnie . . . Major Thomas.

[*The conventional chant begins*]

MINNIE. How d'you do?
THOMAS. How d'you do?
CLARA. How d'you do?
MINNIE. How d'you do, Philip?
PHILIP. How d'you do?
CLARA. How d'you do?
PHILIP. How d'you do?

[*The chant over, the company re-settles;* MR. HUXTABLE *button-holing* PHILIP *in the process with an air of some mystery*]

MR. HUXTABLE. By the way, Phil, remind me to ask you something before you go . . . rather important.

PHILIP. I shall be at your place in the morning. Thomas is coming to go through some figures.

MR. HUXTABLE [*with a regular snap*]. Yes . . . I sha'n't.

PHILIP. The State meeting is in Bond Street, three o'clock.

MR. HUXTABLE. I know, I know. [*Then, finding himself prominent, he captures the conversation*] I'm slacking off, Major Thomas, slacking off. Ever since I was ill I've been slacking off.

MRS. HUXTABLE. You are perfectly well now, Henry.

MR. HUXTABLE. Not the point. I want leisure, you know, leisure. Time for reading . . . time to think a bit.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Nonsense! [*She adds, with correctness*] Major Thomas will excuse me.

MR. HUXTABLE [*on his hobby*]. Oh, well . . . a man must . . . some portion of his life . . .

THOMAS. Quite. I got most of my reading done early.

MRS. HUXTABLE. The natural time for it.

MR. HUXTABLE. Ah, lucky feller! Educated, I suppose. Well, I wasn't. I've been getting the books for years — good editions. I'd like you to see my library. But these geniuses want settling down to . . . if a man's to keep pace with the thought of the world, y' know. Macaulay, Erbert Spencer, Grote's Istory of Greece! I've got em all there.

[*He finds no further response.* MRS. HUXTABLE *fills the gap*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. I thought the sermon dull this morning, Amy, didn't you?

MRS. MADRAS [*unexpectedly*]. No, I didn't.

MINNIE [*to do her share of the entertaining*]. Mother, somebody ought to speak about those boys . . . it's disgraceful. Mr. Vivian had actually to turn round from the organ at them during the last hymn.

[JULIA, *her things taken off, re-appears.* MR. HUXTABLE *is on the spot*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Ah, my daughter Julia . . . Major ——

JULIA. We've been introduced, Father.

[*She says this with a hauteur which really is pure nervousness, but* MR. HUXTABLE *is sufficiently crushed*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Oh, I beg pardon.

[*But* MRS. HUXTABLE *disapproves of any self-assertion, and descends upon the culprit; who is, for some obscure reason (or for none), more often disapproved of than the others*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. Close the door, please, Julia.

JULIA. I'm sorry, Mother.

[PHILIP *closes the offending door.* JULIA *obliterates herself in a chair, and the conversation, hardly encouraged by this little affray, comes to an intolerable standstill. At last* CLARA *makes an effort*]

CLARA. Is Jessica quite well, Philip?

PHILIP. Yes, thank you, Clara.

MRS. HUXTABLE. And dear little Mildred?

PHILIP. Yes, thank you, Aunt Kate.

[*Further standstill. Then* MINNIE *contrives a remark*]

MINNIE. Do you still like that school for her?

PHILIP [*with finesse*]. It seems to provide every accomplishment that money can buy.

[MRS. HUXTABLE *discovers a sure opening*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. Have you been away for the summer, Major Thomas?

THOMAS [*vaguely — he is getting sympathetically tongue-tied*]. Oh . . . yes . . .

PHILIP. Tommy and Jessica and I took our holidays motoring around Munich and into it for the operas.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Was that pleasant?

PHILIP. Very.

MRS. HUXTABLE. And where was dear Mildred?

PHILIP. With her aunt most of the time . . . Jessica's sister-in-law, you know.

MINNIE. Lady Ames?

PHILIP. Yes.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*innocently, genuinely snobbish*]. Very nice for her.

MR. HUXTABLE. We take a ouse at Weymouth, as a rule.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Do you know Weymouth, Major Thomas?

THOMAS. No, I don't.

MRS. HUXTABLE. George III. used to stay there, but that is a hotel now.

MR. HUXTABLE. Keep your spare money in the country, y' know.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Oh, there is everything one wants at Weymouth.

[*But even this subject flags*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. You think more of Bognor, Amy, I know.

MRS. MADRAS. Only to live in, Katherine.

[*They have made their last effort. The conversation is dead.* MR. HUXTABLE'S *discomfort suddenly becomes physical*]

MR. HUXTABLE. I'm going to change my coat.

PHILIP. I think perhaps we ought to be off.

MR. HUXTABLE. No, no, no, no, no! I sha'n't be a minute. Don't go, Phil; there's a good fellow.

[*And he has left them all to it. The* HUXTABLE *conversation, it will be noticed, consists mainly of asking questions. Visitors, after a time, fall into the habit, too*]

PHILIP. Do you like this house better than the old one, Clara?

CLARA. It has more rooms, you know.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Do you live in London, Major Thomas?

THOMAS. No, I live at Woking. I come up and down every day. I think the country's better for the children.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Not a cheerful place, is it?

THOMAS. Oh, very cheerful.

MRS. HUXTABLE. I had thought not, for some reason.

EMMA. The cemetery, Mother.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*accepting the suggestion with dignity*]. Perhaps.

CLARA. And of course there's a much larger garden. We have the garden of the next house as well.

JANE. Not all the garden of the next house.

CLARA. Well, most of it.

[*This stimulating difference of opinion takes them to the balcony.* PHILIP *follows.* JULIA *follows* PHILIP. MINNIE *departs to take her things off*]

JULIA. Do you notice how near the Crystal Palace seems? That means rain.

PHILIP. Of course . . . you can see the Crystal Palace.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Julia, do you think you won't catch cold on the balcony without a hat?

JULIA [*meek, but, before the visitor, determined*]. I don't think so, Mother.

[MRS. HUXTABLE *turns, with added politeness, to* MAJOR THOMAS]

MRS. HUXTABLE. Yes, we used to live not so far along the hill; it certainly was a smaller house.

[PHILIP *is now on the balcony, receiving more information*]

PHILIP. That's Ruskin's house, is it? Yes, I see the chimney pots.

MRS. HUXTABLE. I should not have moved, myself, but I was overruled.

EMMA. Mother, we had grown out of Hollybank.

MRS. HUXTABLE. I was overruled. Things are done on a larger scale than they used to be. Not that I approve of that.

THOMAS. Of course one's family will grow up.

MRS. HUXTABLE. People spend their money now-a-days. I remember my father's practice was to live on half his income. However, he lost the greater part of his money by unwise investments in lead, I think it was. I was at school at the time, in Brighton. And he educated me above my station in life.

[*At this moment* CLARA *breaks out of the conservatory. Something has happened*]

CLARA. Jane, the Agapanthus is out at last!

JANE. Oh!

[*They crowd in to see it.* PHILIP *crowds in, too.* MRS. HUXTABLE *is unmoved*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. We are told that riches are a snare, Major Thomas.

THOMAS. It is one I have always found easy to avoid, Mrs. Huxtable.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*oblivious of the joke, which, indeed, she would not have expected on such a subject*]. And I have noticed that their acquisition seldom improves the character of people in my station of life. I am, of course, ignorant of my husband's affairs . . . that is to say, I keep myself as ignorant as possible . . . but it is my wish that the ordering of our household should remain as it was when we were first married.

THOMAS [*forestalling a yawn*]. Quite so. Quite so.

[MRS. HUXTABLE *takes a breath*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. A family of daughters, Major Thomas . . .

EMMA [*a little agonised*]. Mother!

MRS. HUXTABLE. What is it, Emma?

[*But* EMMA *thinks better of it, and goes to join the Agapanthus party, saying* —]

EMMA. Nothing, Mother. I beg your pardon.

[MRS. HUXTABLE *retakes her breath*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. What were we saying?

THOMAS [*with resigned politeness*]. A family of daughters.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Yes. Were you in the war?

[*The inexplicable but characteristic suddenness of this rouses the* MAJOR *a little*]

THOMAS. I was.

MRS. HUXTABLE. I find that people look differently on family life to what they used. A man no longer seems prepared to marry and support a wife and family by his unaided exertions. I consider that a pity.

THOMAS [*near another yawn*]. Quite . . . quite so.

MRS. HUXTABLE. I have always determined that my daughters should be sought after for themselves alone. That should ensure their happiness. Any eligible gentleman who visits here constantly is always given to understand, delicately, that nothing need be expected from Mr. Huxtable beyond his approval. You a r e married, I think you said, Major Thomas.

[*This quite wakes him up, though* MRS. HUXTABLE *is really innocent of her implication*]

THOMAS. Yes. Oh, dear me, yes.

MRS. HUXTABLE. And a family?

THOMAS. Four children . . . the youngest is only three.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Pretty dear!

THOMAS. No; ugly little beggar, but has character.

MRS. HUXTABLE. I must take off my things before dinner. You'll excuse me. If one is not punctual one-self . . .

THOMAS. Quite.

MRS. HUXTABLE. We cannot induce you to join us?

THOMAS. Many thanks, but we have to meet Mrs. Phil for lunch in town at two.

MRS. HUXTABLE. I am sorry.

[THOMAS *opens the door for her with his best bow, and she graciously departs, conscious of having properly impressed him.* CLARA, *who has now her things to take off, crosses the room, saying to* PHILIP, *who follows her from the balcony* —]

CLARA. Yes, I'll tell father, Philip, I'm going upstairs.

[THOMAS *opens the door for her, but only with his second best bow, and then turns to* PHILIP *with a sigh*]

THOMAS. Phil, we ought to be going.

PHILIP. Wait till you've seen my uncle again.

THOMAS. All right.

[*He heaves another sigh and sits down. All this time there has been* MRS. MADRAS *upon her sofa, silent, as forgotten as any other piece of furniture for which there is no immediate use.* PHILIP *now goes to her. When she does speak it is unresponsively*]

PHILIP. How long do you stay in town, Mother?

MRS. MADRAS. I have been here a fortnight. I generally stay three weeks.

PHILIP. Jessica has been meaning to ask you to Phillimore Gardens again.

MRS. MADRAS. Has she?

PHILIP [*a little guiltily*]. Her time's very much occupied . . . with one thing and another.

[*Suddenly* MRS. MADRAS *rouses herself*]

MRS. MADRAS. I wish to see your father, Philip.

PHILIP [*in doubt*]. He won't be here long, Mother.

MRS. MADRAS. No, I am sure he won't.

[*With three delicate strides* THOMAS *lands himself onto the balcony*]

PHILIP. Tommy being tactful! Well, I'll say that you want to see him.

MRS. MADRAS. No, please don't. Tell him that I think he ought to come and see me.

PHILIP. He won't come, Mother.

MRS. MADRAS. No, I know he won't. He came to England in May, didn't he? He was here till July, wasn't he? Did he so much as send me a message?

PHILIP [*with unkind patience*]. No, Mother.

MRS. MADRAS. What was he doing all the while, Philip?

PHILIP. I didn't see much of him. I really don't know what he came back for at all. We could have done this business without him, and anyway it hasn't materialised till now. This is why he's passing through England again. I don't think there's much to be gained by your seeing him, you know.

MRS. MADRAS. You are a little heartless, Philip.

[*This being a little true*, PHILIP *a little resents it*]

PHILIP. My dear mother, you and he have been separated for . . . how long is it?

MRS. MADRAS [*with withered force*]. I am his wife still, I should hope. He went away from me when he was young. But I have never forgotten my duty. And now that he is an old man, and past such sin, and I am an old woman, I am still ready to be a comfort to his declining years, and it's right that I should be allowed to tell him so. And you should not let your wife put you against your own mother, Philip.

PHILIP [*bewildered*]. Really!

MRS. MADRAS. I know what Jessica thinks of me. Jessica is very clever, and has no patience with people who can only do their best to be good . . . I understand that. Well, it isn't her duty to love me . . . at least it may not be her duty to love her husband's mother, or it may be, I don't say. But it is your duty. I sometimes think, Philip, you don't love me any longer, though you're afraid to say so.

[*The appeal ends so pathetically that* PHILIP *is very gently equivocal*]

PHILIP. If I didn't love you, my dear mother, I should be afraid to say so.

MRS. MADRAS. When are you to see your father?

PHILIP. We've asked him to dinner to-morrow night.

[*At this moment* EMMA *comes in with a briskness so jarring to* MRS. MADRAS's *already wrought nerves, that she turns on her*]

MRS. MADRAS. Emma, why do you come bouncing in like that when I'm trying to get a private word with Philip?

EMMA. Really, Aunt Amy, the drawing-room belongs to everyone.

MRS. MADRAS. I'm sure I don't know why I come and stay here at all. I dislike your mother intensely.

EMMA. Then kindly don't tell me so. I've no wish not to be polite to you.

PHILIP [*pacifically*]. Emma, I think Uncle Henry ought to attend this meeting to-morrow.

MRS. MADRAS [*beginning to cry*]. Of course he ought. Who is he, to go on like this about Constantine! My handkerchief's upstairs.

EMMA [*contritely*]. Shall I fetch it for you, Aunt Amy?

MRS. MADRAS. No. I'll be a trouble to no one.

[*She retires, injured.* PHILIP *continues, purposely placid*]

PHILIP. What's more, he really wants to attend it.

EMMA. I'm sorry I was rude . . . but she does get on our nerves, you know.

PHILIP. Why do you invite her?

EMMA [*quite jolly with him*]. Oh, we're all very fond of Aunt Amy, and anyhow, mother would think it our duty. I don't see how she can enjoy coming, though. She never goes out anywhere . . . never joins in the conversation . . . just sits nursing herself.

PHILIP [*quizzically*]. You're all too good, Emma.

EMMA. Yes. I heard you making fun of Julia in the conservatory. But if one stopped doing one's duty how upside down the world would be! [*Her voice now takes that tone which is the well-bred substitute for a wink*] I say . . . I suppose I oughtn't to tell you about Julia, but it is rather a joke. You know, Julia gets hysterical sometimes, when she has her headaches.

PHILIP. Does she?

EMMA. Well, a collar marked Lewis Waller came back from the wash in mistake for one of father's. I don't think he lives near here, but it's one of these big steam laundries. And Morgan the cook got it, and she gave it to Julia . . . and Julia kept it. And when mother found out she cried for a whole day. She said it showed a wanton mind.

[PHILIP's *mocking face becomes grave*]

PHILIP. I don't think that's at all amusing, Emma.

EMMA [*in genuine surprise*]. Don't you?

PHILIP. How old is Julia?

EMMA. She's thirty-four. [*Her face falls, too*] No . . . it is rather dreadful, isn't it? [*Then wrinkling her forehead, as at a puzzle*]. It isn't exactly that one wants to get married. I daresay mother is right about that.

PHILIP. About what?

EMMA. Well, some time ago a gentleman proposed to Jane. And mother said it would have been more honourable if he had spoken to father first, and that Jane was the youngest, and too young to know her own mind. Well, you know, she's twenty-six. And then they heard of something he'd once done, and it was put a stop to. And Jane was very rebellious, and mother cried. . . .

PHILIP. Does she always cry?

EMMA. Yes, she does cry, if she's upset about us. And I think she was right. One ought not to risk being unhappy for life, ought one?

PHILIP. Are you all happy now, then?

EMMA. Oh, deep down, I think we are. It would be so ungrateful not to be. When one has a good home and . . . ! But of course living together, and going away together, and being together all the time, one does get a little irritable now and then. I suppose that's why we sit as mum as maggots when people are here; we're afraid of squabbling.

PHILIP. Do you squabble?

EMMA. Not like we used. You know, till we moved into this house, we had only two bedrooms between us, the nursery and the old night nursery. Now Laura and Minnie have one each, and there's one we take by turns. There wasn't a bigger house to be got here, or I suppose we could have had it. They hated the idea of moving far. And it's rather odd, you know, father seems afraid of spending money, though he must have got lots. He says if he gave us any more we shouldn't know what to do with it, . . . and of course that's true.

PHILIP. But what occupations have you girls?

EMMA. We're always busy. I mean there's lots to be done about the house, and there's calling and classes and things. Julia used to sketch quite well. You mustn't think I'm grumbling, Philip. I know I talk too much. They tell me so.

[PHILIP'S *comment is the question, half serious*]

PHILIP. Why don't you go away, all six of you, or say five of you?

EMMA [*wide-eyed*]. Go away!

PHILIP [*comprehensively*]. Out of it.

EMMA [*wider-eyed*]. Where to?

PHILIP [*with a sigh — for her*] Ah, that's just it.

EMMA. How could one! And it would upset them dreadfully. Father and mother don't know that one feels like this at times . . . they'd be very grieved.

[PHILIP *turns to her with kindly irony*]

PHILIP. Emma, people have been worrying your father at the shop lately about the drawbacks of the living in system. Why don't you ask him to look at home for them?

[MR. HUXTABLE *returns, at ease in a jacket. He pats his daughter kindly on the shoulder*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Now run along, Jane . . . I mean Emma . . . I want a word with your cousin.

EMMA. Yes, Father.

[EMMA — *or* JANE — *obediently disappears.* PHILIP *then looks sideways at his uncle*]

PHILIP. I've come over, as you asked me to.

MR. HUXTABLE. I didn't ask you.

PHILIP. You dropped a hint.

MR. HUXTABLE [*almost with a blush*]. Did I? I dessay I did.

PHILIP. But you must hurry up and decide about the meeting to-morrow. Thomas and I have got to go.

MR. HUXTABLE. Phil, I suppose you're set on selling.

PHILIP. Quite.

MR. HUXTABLE. You young men! The Madras Ouse means nothing to you.

PHILIP [*anti-sentimental*]. Nothing unsaleable, Uncle.

MR. HUXTABLE. Well, well, well! [*Then, in a furtive fuss*] Well, just a minute, my boy, before your aunt comes down . . . she's been going on at me upstairs, y' know! Something you must do for me to-morrow, like a good feller, at the shop in the morning.

[*He suddenly becomes portentous*] Have you heard this yet about Miss Yates?

PHILIP. No.

MR. HUXTABLE. Disgraceful! Disgraceful!

PHILIP. She got on very well in Bond Street . . . learnt a good deal. She has only been back a few weeks.

MR. HUXTABLE [*snorting derisively*]. Learnt a good deal! [*Then he sights* THOMAS *on the balcony, and hails him*] Oh, come in, Major Thomas. [*And dropping his voice again ominously*] Shut the window, if you don't mind; we don't want the ladies to hear this.

[THOMAS *shuts the window, and* MR. HUXTABLE *spreads himself to the awful enjoyment of imparting scandal*]

MR. HUXTABLE. I tell you, my boy, up at your place, got hold of she's been by some feller . . . some West End Club feller, I dessay . . . and he's put her in the . . . well, I tell you! ! Major Thomas will excuse me. Not a chit of a girl, mind you, but first hand in our Costume room. Buyer we were going to make her, and all!

[PHILIP *frowns, both at the news and at his uncle's manner of giving it*]

PHILIP. What do you want me to do?

MR. HUXTABLE [*more portentous than ever*]. You wait; that's not the worst of it. You know Brigstock.

PHILIP. Do I?

MR. HUXTABLE. Oh, yes; third man in the Osiery.

PHILIP. True.

MR. HUXTABLE. Well . . . it seems that more than a week ago Miss Chancellor had caught them kissing.

PHILIP [*his impatience of the display growing*]. Caught *who* kissing?

MR. HUXTABLE. I know it ain't clear. Let's go back to the beginning. . . Major Thomas will excuse me.

THOMAS [*showing the properest feeling*]. Not at all.

MR. HUXTABLE. Wednesday afternoon, Willoughby, that's our doctor, comes up as usual. Miss Yates goes in to see him. Miss Chancellor — that's our housekeeper, Major Thomas — over'ears, quite by accident, so she says, and afterwards taxes her with it.

PHILIP. Unwise.

MR. HUXTABLE. No! no! Her plain duty . . . she knows my principle about such things. But then she remembers about the kissing and that gets about among our young ladies. Somebody stupid there, I grant you, but you know what these things are. And then it gets about about Miss Yates . . . all over the shop. And then it turns out that Brigstock's a married man . . . been married two years . . . secret from us, you know, because he's living in and on promotion and all the rest. And yesterday morning his wife turns up in my office, and has hysterics, and says her husband's been slandered.

PHILIP. I don't see why Miss Yates should come to any particular harm at our place. A girl's only out of our sight at week ends, and then we're supposed to know where she is.

MR. HUXTABLE [*still instinctively spreading himself, but with that wistful look creeping on him now*]. Well . . . I had er up the day before. And I don't know what's coming over me. I scolded her well. I was in the right in all I said . . . but . . . ! Have you ever suddenly eard your own voice saying a thing? Well, I did . . . and it sounded more like a dog barking than me. And I went funny all over. So I told her to leave the room. [*He grows distressed and appealing*] And you must take it on, Phil, . . . it ought to be settled to-morrow. Miss Yates must have the sack, and I'm not sure Brigstock hadn't better have the sack. We don't want to lose Miss Chancellor, but really if she can't hold er tongue at her age . . . well, she'd better have . . .

PHILIP [*out of patience*]. Oh, nonsense, Uncle!

MR. HUXTABLE [*his old unquestioning self asserted for a moment*]. No, I will not have these scandals in the shop. We've always been free of em . . . almost always. I don't want to be hard on the girl. If the man's in our employ, and you can find im out . . . punish the guilty as well as the innocent . . . I'm for all that. [*That breath exhausted, he continues, quite pathetically, to* THOMAS] But I do not know what's coming over me. Before I got ill I'd have tackled this business like winking. But when you're a long time in bed . . . I'd never been ill like that before . . . I dunno how it is . . . you get thinking . . . and things which used to be quite clear don't seem nearly so clear . . . and then after, when you start

to do and say the things that used to come natural . . . they don't come so natural as they did, and that puts you off something . . .

[*This is interrupted by the re-appearance of* MRS. HUXTABLE, *lace-capped, and ready for dinner. She is at the pitch to which the upstairs dispute with her husband evidently brought her. It would seem he bolted in the middle of it*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. Is it the fact, Philip, that if your uncle does not attend the meeting to-morrow that this business transaction with Mr. — I forget his name — the American gentleman . . . and which I, of course, know nothing about, will be seriously upset?

MR. HUXTABLE [*joining battle*]. Kitty, I don't see why I shouldn't go. If Constantine chooses to turn up . . . that is his business. I needn't speak directly to him . . . so to say.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*hurling this choice bolt from her vocabulary*]. A quibble, Henry.

MR. HUXTABLE. If he's leaving England now for good . . .

MRS. HUXTABLE. But you do as you like, of course.

MR. HUXTABLE [*wistful again*]. I should so like you to be convinced.

MRS. HUXTABLE. Don't prevaricate, Henry. And your sister is just coming into the room. We had better drop the subject.

[*And in* MRS. MADRAS *does come, but what with one thing and another* MR. HUXTABLE *is now getting what he would call thoroughly put out*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Now if Amelia here was to propose seeing im ——

MRS. HUXTABLE. Henry . . . a little consideration!

MR. HUXTABLE [*goaded to the truth*]. Well, I want to go, Kitty, and that's all about it. And I dropped a int, I did, to Phil to come over and help me through it with you. I thought he'd make it seem as if it was most pressing business . . . only he hasn't . . . so as to hurt your feelings less. Because I'd been bound to have told you afterwards, or it might have slipped out somehow. Goodness gracious me, here's the Madras House, which I've sunk enough money in these last ten years to build a battleship, very nearly . . . a small battleship, y' know . . . it's to be sold because Phil won't stand by me, and his father don't care a button now. Not but what that's Constantine all over! Marries you, Amelia, behaves like a duke and an archangel, mixed, for eighteen months, and then ——

MRS. HUXTABLE [*scandalised, "Before visitors, too!"*]. Henry!

MR. HUXTABLE. All right, all right. And I'm not to attend this meeting, if you please!

[*The little storm subsides*]

MRS. MADRAS. It's to be sold, is it?

PHILIP. Yes, Mother.

MRS. MADRAS [*at her brother*]. It was started with my money as well as yours.

[MR. HUXTABLE *is recovering, and takes no notice*]

PHILIP. Yes, Mother, we know.

MRS. MADRAS. And if that's all you've lost by Constantine, I don't see you've a right to be so bitter against him.

[*She is still ignored.* MR. HUXTABLE, *quite cheery again, goes on affably*]

MR. HUXTABLE. D'you know, Major Thomas, that twenty years ago, when that shop began to be the talk of London, Duchesses have been known to go, to all intents and purposes, on their knees to him to design them a dress. Wouldn't do it unless he pleased — not unless he approved their figure. Ad Society under his thumb.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*from the height of respectability*]. No doubt he knew his business.

MR. HUXTABLE [*in an ecstasy*]. Knew his business! Knew his business! ! My boy, in the old days . . . asked everywhere, like one of themselves, very nearly! First of his sort to break that barrier. D'you know, it's my belief that if Mrs. Gladstone had been thirty years younger, and a fashionable woman . . . he could have had a knighthood.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*explicitly*]. He was untrue to his wife, Henry.

[*At this* MR. HUXTABLE *is the moral man again. These sudden changes are so like him. They are genuine; he is just half conscious of their suddenness*]

Mr. Huxtable. Yes, I know, and Amy did what she should have done. You see, it wasn't an ordinary case, Major Thomas. It was girls in the shop. And even though he took em out of the shop . . . that's a slur on the whole trade. A man in his position . . . you can't overlook that.

Mrs. Madras [*palely asserting herself*]. I could have overlooked it if I had chosen.

Philip [*to whom this is all so futile and foolish*]. My dear mother, you were unhappy with my father, and you left him . . . the matter is very simple.

Mrs. Madras. I beg your pardon, Philip . . . I was not unhappy with him.

Mrs. Huxtable. Amy, how could you be happy with a man who was unfaithful to you? What nonsense!

[Jane *and* Julia, *from the balcony, finding the window locked, tap with their finger-nails upon the pane. The very sharpness of the sound begins to put out* Mr. Huxtable *again*]

Mr. Huxtable. No, no! They can't come in! [*He mouths at them through the window*] You can't come in.

[Jane *mouths back*]

Mr. Huxtable. What? [*Then the sense of it coming to him, he looks at his watch*] No, it isn't . . . two minutes yet.

[*And he turns away, having excluded the innocent mind from this unseemly discussion. But at the very moment* Laura *comes in by the door. His patience flies*]

Mr. Huxtable. Oh, damn! Well, I beg pardon. [*Then in desperate politeness*] Let me introduce . . . my daughter Laura . . . Major Thomas.

Laura [*collectedly*]. We have met, Father.

Mr. Huxtable [*giving it all up*]. Well . . . how can I tell . . . there are so many of you!

Mrs. Huxtable [*severely*]. I think, Henry, you had better go to this meeting to-morrow.

Mr. Huxtable [*wistful for a moment*]. You think I ought?

Mrs. Huxtable. You know you ought not.

Mr. Huxtable [*disputing it manfully*]. No . . . I don't know I ought not. It isn't so easy to know what ought and ought not to be done as you always make out, Kitty. And suppose I just do something wrong for once, and see what happens.

Mrs. Huxtable. Henry, don't say such things.

Mr. Huxtable [*very reasonably to* Major Thomas]. Well, since I've been ill ——

[*But* Emma *and* Minnie *have come in now, and* Jane *and* Julia, *finding their exile a little unreasonable, rattle hard at the window.* Mr. Huxtable *gives it all up again*]

Mr. Huxtable. Oh, let em in, Phil . . . there's a good feller.

Thomas. Allow me.

[*And he does so*]

Emma [*crisply*]. Oh! what's it all been about?

Mrs. Huxtable. Never mind, Emma.

[*She says this to* Emma *as she would have said to it her at the age of four. Meanwhile,* Mr. Huxtable *has recovered*]

Mr. Huxtable. You know, Major Thomas, Constantine could always get the better of me in little things.

[Jane *has sighted* Minnie, *and callously, across the breadth of the room, imparts a tragedy*]

Jane. Minnie, your frog's dead . . . in the conservatory.

[Minnie *pales*]

Minnie. Oh, dear!

Mr. Huxtable. . . . After the difference I began to write to him as Dear Sir; to this day he'll send me business letters beginning Dear Arry.

[Minnie *is hurrying to the glass house of death*]

Jane. I buried it.

Mr. Huxtable. . . . Always at his ease, you know.

[Thomas *escapes from him.* Philip *is bending over his mother a little kindlier*]

Philip. I'll try to see you again before you go back to Bognor, Mother.

[*At this moment the gong rings. A tremendous gong, beloved of the English middle class, which makes any house seem small. A hollow sound; the dinner hour striking its own empty stomach.* Jane, *whose things are not taken off, gives a mitigated yelp and dashes for the door, dashes into the returning, tidy* Clara. Mrs. Huxtable *shakes a finger*]

Mrs. Huxtable. Late again, Jane.

PHILIP. We'll be off, Aunt Katherine.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*with a common humanity she has not shewn before*]. Philip . . . never think I mean to be self-righteous about your father. But he made your mother most unhappy when you were too young to know of it . . . and there is the example to others, isn't there?

PHILIP. Yes . . . of course, Aunt Kate. I know just how you feel about it . . . I'm not fond of him, either.

[PHILIP *must be a little mischievous with his aunt. She responds by returning at once to her own apparent self again*]

MRS. HUXTABLE. My dear boy . . . and your own father!

[*From the balcony one hears the tag of* JULIA'S *entertaining of* MAJOR THOMAS. *They have been peering at the horizon*]

JULIA. Yes, it means rain . . . when you see it so clearly.

[*A general-post of leave-taking now begins*]

PHILIP. Well, see you to-morrow, Uncle Henry.

MR. HUXTABLE. Yes, I suppose so. Oh, and about that other matter. . . .

PHILIP. What can I do?

MR. HUXTABLE. I'll telephone you in the morning.

PHILIP. Good-bye, Mother.

THOMAS. Good-bye, Mrs. Huxtable.

MRS. HUXTABLE [*with a final flourish of politeness*]. You have excused this domestic discussion, I hope, Major Thomas . . . it will happen sometimes.

THOMAS. I've been most interested.

[MINNIE *comes back sadly from the frog's grave*]

PHILIP. Good-bye, Clara.

CLARA. Good-bye, Philip.

MR. HUXTABLE. You really won't stay to dinner?

PHILIP. Good-bye, Laura.

THOMAS. Thanks, no. We meet to-morrow.

[*The general-post quickens, the chorus grows confused*]

LAURA. Good-bye.

THOMAS. Good-bye.

JANE. Good-bye.

THOMAS. Good-bye.

PHILIP. Good-bye, Emma — oh, pardon.

[*There has been the confusion of crossed hands. Apologies, withdrawals, a treading on toes, more apologies*]

EMMA. Good-bye, Major Thomas.

PHILIP. Now good-bye, Emma.

THOMAS. Good-bye, Mrs. Madras.

PHILIP. Good-bye.

THOMAS. Good-bye.

[*The chorus and the general-post continue, until at last* PHILIP *and* THOMAS *escape to a tram and a tube and their lunch, while the* HUXTABLES *sit down in all ceremony to Sunday dinner: Roast beef, horse-radish, Yorkshire pudding, brown potatoes, Brussels sprouts, apple tart, custard and cream, Stilton cheese, dessert*]

ACT II

The business offices of ROBERTS *and* HUXTABLE *are tucked away upon the first floor somewhere at the back of that large drapery establishment. The waiting-room — the one in which employee sits in shivering preparation for interviews with employer — besides thus having been the silent scene of more misery than most places on earth, is one of the very ugliest rooms that ever entered into the mind of a builder and decorator. Four plain walls of brick or plaster, with seats round them, would have left it a waiting-room pure and simple. But the ugly hand of the money maker was upon it. In the person of a contractor he thrust upon the unfortunate room — as on all the others — everything that could excuse his price and disguise his profit. The walls, to start with, were distempered an unobjectionable green, but as that might seem too plain and cheap, a dado of a nice stone colour was added, topped with stencilling in dirty red of a pattern that once was Greek.*

The fireplace is apparently designed to provide the maximum amount of work possible for the wretched boy who cleans it every morning, retiring from the contest well blackleaded himself. The mantelpiece above — only an expert in such abominations knows what it is made of; but it pretends, with the aid of worm-shaped dashes of paint, to be brown marble. It is too high

for comfort, too low for dignity. It has to be dusted, and usually isn't.

The square lines of the two long windows, which look upon some sanitary brick airshaft, have been carefully spoilt by the ovalling of their top panes. The half-glazed door, that opens from the passage, is of the wrong shape; the green baize door, that admits to MR. PHILIP'S *room, is of the wrong colour.*

And then the furnishing! Those yellow chairs upholstered in red cotton goose-flesh plush; that plush-seated, plush-backed bench, placed draughtily between the windows! There is a reasonable office table in the middle of the room. On the walls are, firstly, photographs of ROBERTS *and* HUXTABLE. ROBERTS *was a Welshman, and looks it. No prosperous drapery business in London but has its Welshman. There is also a photograph of the premises — actual; and an advertisement sketch of them — ideal. There is a ten-year-old fashion plate: twenty faultless ladies engaged in ladylike occupations or serene in the lack of any. There is an insurance almanac, the one thing of beauty in the room. On the mantelpiece lies a London Directory, the one piece of true colour.*

The hand of the money maker that has wrenched awry the Greek pattern on the wall has been laid also on all the four people who sit waiting for MR. PHILIP *at noon on this Monday; and to the warping more or less of them all.*

MRS. BRIGSTOCK, *sitting stiffly on the plush bench, in brown quilled hat and coat and skirt, is, one would guess, a clerk of some sort. She lacks colour; she lacks repose; she lacks — one stops to consider that she might possibly be a beautiful woman were it not for the things she lacks. But she is the product of fifteen years or so of long hours and little lunch. Certainly at this moment she is not seen at her best. She sits twisting her gloved hands, pulling at a loose thread, now and then biting it. Otherwise she bites her lips; her face is drawn, and she stares in front of her with only a twist of the eye now and then towards her husband, who is uncomfortable upon a chair a few feet away.*

If one were asked to size up MR. BRIGSTOCK, *one would say: Nothing against him. The position of Third Man in the Hosiery does not require any special talents, and it doesn't get them; or if it does, they don't stay there. And* MR. BRIGSTOCK *stays there — just stays there. It sums him up — sums up millions of him — to say that in their youth they have energy enough to get into a position; afterwards, in their terror — or sometimes only because their employers have not the heart to dismiss them — they stay there. Sometimes, though, the employers have the heart, and do. And then what happens? Considered as a man rather than a wage earner — not that it is usual for us so to consider him — he is one of those who, happily for themselves, get married by women whom apparently no other man much wants to marry. Subdued to what he works in, he is dressed as a Third Man in the Hosiery should be. He is, at the moment, as agitated as his wife, and as he has no nervous force to be agitated with, is in a state of greater wretchedness.*

On the other side of the room sits MISS CHANCELLOR. *Every large living-in draper's should have as housekeeper a lady of a certain age, who can embody in her own person the virtues she will expect in the young ladies under her. Decorum, sobriety of thought, tidiness, respect of persons — these are the qualities generally necessary to a shop-assistant's salvation.* MISS CHANCELLOR *radiates them. They are genuine in her, too. She is now planted squarely on her chair, as it might be, in easy authority, but looking closely, one may see that it is a dignified resentment keeping her there unmovable.*

In the middle of the room, by the table, sits MISS YATES. *While they wait this long time the other three try hard to keep their eyes off her. It isn't easy; partly because she is in the middle of the room and they are not. But anyhow and anywhere,* MISS YATES *is a person that you look at, though you may ignorantly wonder why. She is by no means pretty, nor does she try to attract you. But you look at her*

as you look at a fire or a light in an otherwise empty room. She is not a lady, nor is she well educated, and ten years' shop-assisting has left its marks on her. But there it is. To the seeing eye she glows in that room like a live coal. She has genius — she has life, to however low a use she — or the world for her — may put it. And commoner people are lustreless beside her.

They wait silently, and the tension increases. At last it is slightly relieved by PHILIP'S *arrival. He comes in briskly, his hat on, a number of unopened letters in his hand. They get up to receive him with varying degrees of respect and apprehension.*

PHILIP. Good morning, Miss Chancellor. Good morning, Miss Yates. Good morning, Mr. Brigstock.

MR. BRIGSTOCK [*introducing her*]. Mrs. Brigstock.

[PHILIP *nods pleasantly to* MRS. BRIGSTOCK, *who purses her lips in a half-frightened, half-vengeful way, and sits down again. Then he puts his hat on the mantelpiece and settles himself in the master position at the table*]

PHILIP. I'm afraid I've kept you waiting a little. Well, now —

[*There is a sharp knock at the door*]

Come.

[*It is* BELHAVEN. BELHAVEN *is seventeen, perhaps, on the climb from office boy to clerk, of the usual pattern.* PHILIP *greets him pleasantly*]

Oh, good morning, Belhaven.

BELHAVEN. I've put Major Thomas in your room, sir, as the papers were there, but Mr. Huxtable's is empty, if you'd like . . .

PHILIP. No, this'll do.

BELHAVEN. Major Thomas said would you speak to him for a minute, as soon as you came.

PHILIP. I'll go in now.

BELHAVEN. Thank you, sir.

PHILIP. [*To the waiting four*] Excuse me one minute, please.

[BELHAVEN *bolts back to his outer office by one door — his way of opening and getting through it is a labour-saving invention; and* PHILIP *goes to find* THOMAS *through the other. There is silence again, held by these four at a greater tension than ever. At last* MRS. BRIGSTOCK, *least able to bear it, gives one desperate wriggle-fidget.* BRIGSTOCK *looks at her deprecatingly and says . . .*]

MR. BRIGSTOCK. Will you sit here, Freda, if you feel the draught?

MRS. BRIGSTOCK [*just trusting herself to answer*]. No, thank you.

[*Silence again, but soon broken by* PHILIP, *who comes from the other room, throwing over his shoulder the last of his few words with* THOMAS, *"All right, Tommy."* TOMMY, *even at the dullest business, always pleasantly amuses him. Then he settles himself at the table for the second time, conciliatory, kind*]

PHILIP. Well, now . . .

[MRS. BRIGSTOCK, *determined to be first heard, lets slip the torrent of her wrath*]

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. It's slander, Mr. Madras, and I request that it shall be retracted immediately . . . before everybody . . . in the public press . . . by advertisement.

MR. BRIGSTOCK [*in an agonised whisper*]. Oh, Freda . . . not so eadstrong.

[PHILIP *is elaborately cool and good tempered*]

PHILIP. Miss Chancellor.

[MISS CHANCELLOR *is even more elaborately cold and dignified*]

MISS CHANCELLOR. Yes, sir.

PHILIP. I think we might inform Mrs. Brigstock that we're sorry the accusation has become so public . . . it has naturally caused her some pain.

MRS. BRIGSTOCK [*ascending the scale*]. I don't believe it . . . I didn't believe it . . . if I'd have believed it ——

MR. BRIGSTOCK [*interposing*]. Oh, Freda!

MISS CHANCELLOR [*very definitely*]. I saw them kissing. I didn't know Mr. Brigstock was a married man. And even if I had known it . . . I saw them kissing.

[MISS YATES, *opening her mouth for the first time, shows an easy impatience of their anger and their attitudes, too*]

MISS YATES. Oh . . . what sort of a kiss?

Miss Chancellor. Are there different sorts of kisses, Miss Yates?

Miss Yates. Well . . . aren't there?

Mrs. Brigstock [*growing shrill now*]. He owns he did that, and he knows he shouldn't have, and he asked my pardon . . . and whose business is it, but mine . . . ?

Mr. Brigstock [*vainly interposing this time*]. Oh, Freda!

Mrs. Brigstock [*climbing to hysterics*]. Hussy to let him . . . hussy . . . hussy!

[Philip *adds a little severity to his coolness*]

Philip. Mrs. Brigstock.

Miss Yates [*as pleasant as possible*]. All right . . . Mr. Madras, I don't mind.

Philip. But I do. Mrs. Brigstock, I shall not attempt to clear up this business unless we can all manage to keep our tempers.

[Miss Yates *collectedly explains*]

Miss Yates. I've been friends with Mr. Brigstock these twelve years. We both came into the firm together . . . and I knew he was married . . . p'raps I'm the only one that did. And when I told him . . . all I chose to tell him as to what had happened to me . . . I asked him to kiss me just to show he didn't think so much the worse of me. And he gave me one kiss . . . here. [*She dabs with one finger the left top corner of her forehead*] And that is the truth of that.

Philip. You might have given this explanation to Miss Chancellor.

Miss Yates. She wouldn't have believed it.

Miss Chancellor. I don't believe it.

Mrs. Brigstock [*with gathering force*]. William! William!! William!!!

[Brigstock *desperately musters a little authority*]

Mr. Brigstock. Freda, be quiet . . . haven't I sworn it to you on the Bible?

[Miss Chancellor *now puts her case*]

Miss Chancellor. I may say I have known other young ladies in trouble and whether they behaved properly or improperly under the circumstances . . . and I've known them behave both . . . they did not confide in their gentlemen friends . . . without the best of reasons.

Philip. There is no reason that they shouldn't, Miss Chancellor.

Miss Chancellor. They didn't.

Miss Yates. Well . . . I did.

Miss Chancellor. I had no wish for the scandal to get about. I don't know how it happened.

Miss Yates. Ask your little favourite, Miss Jordan, how it happened.

[*This shot tells.* Miss Chancellor's *voice sharpens*]

Miss Chancellor. Mr. Madras, if I am to be accused of favouritism —

Philip. Yes, yes . . . we'll keep to the point, I think.

Miss Chancellor. If Mr. Brigstock wasn't the man —

Mrs. Brigstock [*the spring touched*]. William!

Miss Chancellor. Why shouldn't she tell me who it was?

Miss Yates. Why should I?

Miss Chancellor. Am I here to look after the morals of these young ladies, or am I not?

Mrs. Brigstock. A set of hussies.

Mr. Brigstock [*in agony*]. Freda, you'll get me the sack.

Philip. Brigstock, if I wished to give any one the sack, I should not be taking the trouble to discuss this with you all in — I hope — a reasonable way.

[Mrs. Brigstock, *much resenting reasonableness, stands up now to give battle*]

Mrs. Brigstock. Oh, give him the sack, if you please, Mr. Madras. It's time he had it for his own sake.

Mr. Brigstock. No, Freda!

Mrs. Brigstock. You've got your way to make in the world, haven't you? He's got to start on his own like other people, hasn't he?

Mr. Brigstock [*feeling safety and his situation slipping*]. In time, Freda.

Mrs. Brigstock. Now's the time. If you're not sick of the life you lead . . . seeing me once a week for an hour or two . . . then I am. And this libel and slander makes about the last straw, I should think.

Philip. How long have you been married, Mrs. Brigstock?

Mrs. Brigstock. Four years.

Philip. Four years!

Mrs. Brigstock [*a little quelled by his equable courtesy*]. Four years!

Philip [*in amazed impatience*]. My dear Brigstock, why not have come to the firm and told them? It could have been arranged for you to live out with your wife.

Mr. Brigstock. Well, I have been thinking of it lately, sir, but I never seem to happen on a really likely moment. I'm afraid I'm not a favourite in my department.

Mrs. Brigstock. No fault of his!

Mr. Brigstock. And it's sometimes a very little thing makes the difference between a feller's going and staying . . . when all those that aren't wanted are cleared out after sale time, I mean, for instance. And, of course, the thirty pound a year they allow you to live out on does not keep you . . . it's no use my saying it does. And when you're married . . .

Mrs. Brigstock [*who has gathered her grievances again*]. I agreed to it. I have my profession, too. We've been saving quicker. It's three hundred pounds now, all but a bit . . . that's enough to start on. I've got my eye on the premises. It's near here, I don't mind telling you. Why shouldn't we do as well as others . . . and ride in our carriages when we're fifty!

Mr. Brigstock [*deprecating such great optimism*]. Well, I've asked advice . . .

Mrs. Brigstock. You think too much of advice. If you'd value yourself higher! Give him the sack, if you please, Mr. Madras, and I'll say thank you.

[*She finishes, and suddenly* Miss Yates *takes up this part of the tale quite otherwise*]

Miss Yates. He has asked my advice, and I've told him to stay where he is.

Mrs. Brigstock [*her breath leaving her*]. Oh, indeed!

Miss Yates. He's as steady as can be. But his appearance is against him.

Mrs. Brigstock [*hardly recovering it*]. Well, I never!

Mr. Brigstock. A feller does think of the future, Marion.

Miss Yates. I wouldn't if I were you. I don't know where we all get to when we're fifty, and I've never met anyone who did. We're not in the shop any longer, most of us, are we? And we're not all in our carriages.

Mr. Brigstock [*meekly*]. I suppose it can be done.

Miss Yates. Oh . . . premises near here and three hundred pounds. Perfect foolery, and William ought to know it is. This firm'll undersell you and eat you up and a dozen more like you . . . and the place that's trusted you for your stock will sell up every stick, and there you'll be in the gutter. I advised him to own up to y o u [*she nods at* Mrs. Brigstock] and live out and do the best he could.

Mrs. Brigstock [*more drenched with the cold water than she'll own*]. I'm much obliged, I'm sure . . . I've my own opinion. . . .

Philip [*who has been studying her rather anxiously*]. You've no children, Mrs. Brigstock?

[Mrs. Brigstock *goes white*]

Mrs. Brigstock. No, I've no children. How can you save when you have children? But if it was his child this hussy was going to have, and I thought God wouldn't strike him dead on the spot, I'd do it myself, so I would . . . and he knows I would.

Mr. Brigstock. Haven't I taken my oath to you, Freda?

Mrs. Brigstock. How can I tell if he's speaking the truth . . . I ask you how can I tell? I lie awake at night away from him till I could scream with thinking about it. And I do scream as loud as I dare . . . not to wake the house. And if somebody don't open that window, I shall go off.

Philip. Open the window, please, Mr. Brigstock.

[Philip's *voice is serious, though he says but a simple thing.* Mr. Brigstock *opens the window as a man may do in a sick room, helpless, a little dazed. Then he turns back to his wife, who is sitting, head tilted against the sharp back of the plush bench, eyes shut, mouth open. Only* Miss Yates *is ready with her bit of practical comfort*]

Miss Yates. Look here, don't you worry. I could have married William if I'd wanted to. That ought to be proof enough.

Mr. Brigstock. There you are, Freda.

Miss Yates. Before he knew you.

Mrs. Brigstock [*opening her eyes*]. Did you ask her?

Miss Yates. No, he never asked me . . . but you know what I mean.

[Miss Yates *gives emphasis to this with what one fears must be described as a wink.* Mrs.

BRIGSTOCK *looks at the acquiescent* BRIGSTOCK *and acknowledges the implication*]

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. Yes, I know. Oh, I don't believe it really.

[*Comforted, she discovers her handkerchief and blows her nose, after which* MISS CHANCELLOR, *who has been sitting all this while still, silent, and scornful, inquires in her politest voice*]

MISS CHANCELLOR. Do you wish me still to remain, Mr. Madras?

PHILIP. One moment.

MISS YATES. Oh, you'll excuse my back, sir.

[*And she turns to the table again*]

PHILIP. I don't think I need detain you any longer, Mr. and Mrs. Brigstock. Your character is now quite clear in the firm's eyes, Brigstock, and I shall see that arrangements are made for you to live out in the future. I apologise to you both for all this unpleasantness.

[*They have both risen at this, and now* BRIGSTOCK *begins, hesitatingly*]

MR. BRIGSTOCK. Well . . . thank you . . . sir . . . and . . .

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. No, William.

MR. BRIGSTOCK. All right, Freda! [*He struggles into his prepared speech*] We are very much obliged to you, sir, but I do not see how I can remain with the firm unless there has been, with regard to the accusation, some definite retraction.

PHILIP [*near the end of his patience*]. My good man, it is retracted.

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. Publicly.

PHILIP. Nonsense, Mrs. Brigstock.

MRS. BRIGSTOCK [*quite herself again*]. Is it indeed . . . how would you like it? [*Then becoming self-conscious*] Well, I beg pardon. I'm sure we're very sorry for Miss Yates, and I wish she were married.

MISS YATES [*with some gusto*]. So do I!

[*Suddenly* MISS CHANCELLOR *bursts out*]

MISS CHANCELLOR. Then you wicked girl, why didn't you say so before . . . when I wished to be kind to you? And we shouldn't all be talking in this outrageous, indecent way. I never did in all my life. I don't know how I manage to sit here. Didn't I try to be kind to you?

MISS YATES [*unconquerable*]. Yes, and you tried to cry over me. No, I don't wish I were married.

MR. BRIGSTOCK. Of course it's not for me to say, Marion, but will the way you're going on now stop the other young ladies tattling?

[*The tone of the dispute now sharpens rather dangerously*]

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. How's Mr. Brigstock to remain in the firm if Miss Chancellor does?

PHILIP. That is my business, Mrs. Brigstock.

MISS CHANCELLOR. What . . . when I saw him kissing her . . . kissing her!

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. William!

PHILIP. That has been explained.

MISS CHANCELLOR. No, Mr. Madras, while I'm housekeeper here I will not countenance loose behaviour. I don't believe one word of these excuses.

PHILIP. This is just obstinacy, Miss Chancellor.

MISS CHANCELLOR. And personally I wish to reiterate every single thing I said.

[*And now it degenerates into a wrangle*]

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. Then the law shall deal with you.

MISS CHANCELLOR. You can dismiss me at once, if you like, Mr. Madras.

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. It's libellous . . . it's slander . . . !

MR. BRIGSTOCK. Oh, Freda, don't!

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. Yes, and she can be put in prison for it.

MISS CHANCELLOR. If Miss Yates and Mr. Brigstock stay with this firm, I go.

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. And she shall be put in prison . . . the cat!

MR. BRIGSTOCK. Don't, Freda!

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. The heartless cat! Do you swear it isn't true, William?

PHILIP. Take your wife away, Brigstock.

[PHILIP'S *sudden vehemence causes* MRS. BRIGSTOCK *to make straight for the edge of her self-control — and over it*]

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. Yes, and he takes himself away . . . leaves the firm, I should think so, and sorry enough you'll be before we've done. I'll see what the law will say to her . . . and they're not a hundred yards off . . . on the better side of the street, too, and a plate glass window as big as yours.

MR. BRIGSTOCK. Do be quiet, Freda!

MRS. BRIGSTOCK [*in hysterics now*]. Three hundred pounds, and how much did Maple have when he started . . . or Whiteley . . . and damages, what's more . . . And me putting up with the life I've led . . . !

[*They wait till the fit subsides —* PHILIP *with kindly impatience,* BRIGSTOCK *in mute apology — and* MRS. BRIGSTOCK *is a mass of sobs. Then* BRIGSTOCK *edges her towards the door*]

PHILIP. Wait . . . wait . . . wait. You can't go into the passage making that noise.

MR. BRIGSTOCK. Oh, Freda, you don't mean it.

MRS. BRIGSTOCK [*relieved and contrite*]. I'm sure I hope I've said nothing unbecoming a lady . . . I didn't mean to.

PHILIP. Not at all . . . it's natural you should be upset.

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. And we're very much obliged for your kind intentions to us . . .

PHILIP. Wait till you're quite calm.

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. Thank you.

[*Then with a final touch of injury, resentment, dignity, she shakes off* BRIGSTOCK'S *timid hold*]

MRS. BRIGSTOCK. You needn't hold me, William.

[WILLIAM *follows her out to forget and make her forget it all as best he can.* PHILIP *comes back to his chair, still good-humoured, but not altogether pleased with his own part in the business so far*]

PHILIP. I'm afraid you've put yourself in the wrong, Miss Chancellor.

MISS CHANCELLOR. One often does, sir, in doing one's duty. [*Then her voice rises to a sort of swan song*] Thirty years have I been with the firm . . . only thirty years. I will leave tomorrow.

PHILIP. I hope you recognise it will not be my fault if you have to.

MISS CHANCELLOR. Miss Yates can obviate it. She has only to speak the truth.

[PHILIP *now makes another effort to be frank and kindly*]

PHILIP. Miss Chancellor, are we quite appreciating the situation from Miss Yates's point of view? Suppose she were married?

MISS YATES. I'm not married.

PHILIP. But if you told us you were, we should have to believe you.

MISS CHANCELLOR. Why, Mr. Madras?

PHILIP [*with a smile*]. It would be good manners to believe her. We must believe so much of what we're told in this world.

MISS YATES [*who has quite caught on*]. Well, I did mean to stick that up on you . . . if anyone wants to know. I bought a wedding ring, and I had it on when I saw Dr. Willoughby. But when she came in with her long face and her What can I do for you, my poor child? . . . well, I just couldn't . . . I suppose the Devil tempted me, and I told her the truth.

PHILIP. That's as I thought, so far. Miss Yates, have you that wedding ring with you?

MISS YATES. Yes, I have . . . it's not real gold.

PHILIP. Put it on.

[MISS YATES, *having fished it out of a petticoat pocket, rather wonderingly does so, and* PHILIP *turns, maliciously humourous, to* MISS CHANCELLOR]

PHILIP. Now where are we, Miss Chancellor?

MISS CHANCELLOR. I think we're mocking at a very sacred thing, Mr. Madras.

MISS YATES. Yes . . . and I won't now.

[*With a sudden access of emotion she slams the ring upon the table.* PHILIP *meditates for a moment on the fact that there are some things in life still inaccessible to his light-hearted logic*]

PHILIP. True . . . true . . . I beg both your pardons. But suppose the affair had not got about, Miss Yates?

MISS YATES. Well . . . I should have had a nice long illness. It'd all depend on whether you wanted me enough to keep my place open.

PHILIP. You are an employee of some value to the firm.

MISS YATES. I reckoned you would. Miss McIntyre'd be pleased to stay on a bit now she's quarrelled with her fiancé. Of course if I'd only been behind the counter . . .

MISS CHANCELLOR [*who has drawn the longest of breaths at this calculated immodesty*]. This is how she brazened it out to me, Mr. Madras. This is

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just what she told Mr. Huxtable . . . and you'll pardon my saying he took a very different view of the matter to what you seem to be taking.

Miss Yates. Oh, I've got to go, now I'm found out . . . I'm not arguing about it.

Miss Chancellor [*severely*]. Mr. Madras, what sort of notions are you fostering in this wretched girl's mind?

Philip [*gently enough*]. I was trying for a moment to put myself in her place.

Miss Chancellor. You will excuse me saying, sir, that you are a man . . .

Philip. Not at all!

[*A poor joke, but* Miss Chancellor *remains unconscious of it*]

Miss Chancellor. Because a woman is independent, and earning her living, she's not to think she can go on as she pleases. If she wishes to have children, Providence has provided a way in the institution of marriage. Miss Yates would have found little difficulty in getting married, I gather.

Miss Yates. Living in here for twelve years!

Miss Chancellor. Have you been a prisoner, Miss Yates? Not to mention that there are two hundred and thirty-five gentlemen employed here.

Miss Yates. Supposing I don't like any of em?

Miss Chancellor. My dear Miss Yates, if you are merely looking for a husband as such . . . well . . . we're all God's creatures, I suppose. Personally, I don't notice much difference in men, anyway.

Miss Yates. Nor did I.

Miss Chancellor. Lack of self-control . . .

Miss Yates. Is it!

Miss Chancellor. . . . And self-respect. That's what the matter is. Are we beasts of the field, I should like to know? I simply do not understand this unladylike attitude towards the facts of life. Is there nothing for a woman to do in the world but to run after men . . . or pretend to run away from them? I am fifty-eight . . . and I have passed, thank God, a busy and a happy and I hope a useful life . . . and I have never thought any more or less of men than I have of any other human beings . . . or any differently. I look upon spinsterhood as an honourable state, as my Bible teaches me to. Men are different. But some women marry happily and well . . . and all women can't . . . and some can't marry at all. These facts have to be faced, I take it.

Philip. We may take it that Miss Yates has been facing them.

Miss Chancellor. Yes, sir, and in what spirit? I have always endeavoured to influence the young ladies under my control towards the virtues of modesty and decorum . . . so that they may regard either state with an indifferent mind. If I can no longer do that, I prefer to resign my charge. I will say before this young person that I regret the story should have got about. But when anyone has committed a fault it seems to me immaterial who knows of it.

Philip [*reduced to irony*]. Do you really think so?

Miss Chancellor. Do you require me any more now?

Philip. I am glad to have had your explanation. We'll have a private talk to-morrow.

Miss Chancellor. Thank you, sir. I think that will be more in order. Good morning.

Philip. Good morning.

[Miss Chancellor *has expressed herself to her entire satisfaction, and retires in good order.* Miss Yates, *conscientiously brazen until the enemy has quite disappeared, collapses pathetically. And* Philip, *at his ease at last, begins to scold her in a most brotherly manner*]

Miss Yates. I'm sure she's quite right in all she says.

Philip. She may not be. But are you the sort of woman to have got yourself into a scrape of this kind, Miss Yates?

Miss Yates. I'm glad you think I'm not, sir.

Philip. Then what on earth did you go and do it for?

Miss Yates. I don't know. I didn't mean to.

Philip. Why aren't you married?

Miss Yates. That's my business. [*Then, as if making amends for the sudden snap*] Oh . . . I've thought of getting married any time these twelve years. But look what happens . . . look at the Brigstocks . . .

Philip. No, no, no . . . that's not what I mean. Why aren't you to be married even now?

MISS YATES. I'd rather not say.

[MISS YATES *assumes an air of reticence natural enough; but there is something a little peculiar in the manner of it, so* PHILIP *thinks*]

PHILIP. Very well.

MISS YATES. I'd rather not talk about that part of it, sir, with you, if you don't mind. [*Then she bursts out again*] I took the risk. I knew what I was about. I wanted to have my fling. And it was fun for a bit. That sounds horrid, I know, but it was.

[PHILIP *is watching her*]

PHILIP. Miss Yates, I've been standing up for you, haven't I?

MISS YATES. Yes.

PHILIP. That's because I have unconventional opinions. But I don't do unconventional things.

MISS YATES [*naïvely*]. Why don't you?

PHILIP. I shouldn't do them well. Now you start on this adventure believing all the other people say, so I'm not happy about you. As man to man, Miss Yates . . . were you in a position to run this risk?

[MISS YATES *honestly thinks before she speaks*]

MISS YATES. Yes . . . I shall be getting a hundred and forty a year living out. I've planned it all. [*She grows happily confidential*] There's a maisonette at Raynes Park, and I can get a cheap girl to look after it and to take care of . . . I shall call him my nephew, like the Popes of Rome used to . . . or why can't I be a widow? I can bring him up and do him well on it. Insurance'll be a bit stiff in case anything happens to me. But I've got nearly two hundred saved in the bank to see me through till next summer.

PHILIP. Where are you going when you leave here? What relations have you?

MISS YATES. I have an aunt. I hate her.

PHILIP. Where are you going for the winter?

MISS YATES. Evercreech.

PHILIP. Where's that?

MISS YATES. I don't know. You get to it from Waterloo. I found it in the A. B. C.

PHILIP [*in protest*]. But my dear girl . . . !

MISS YATES. Well, I want a place where nobody knows me, so I'd better go to one which I don't know, hadn't I? I always make friends. I'm not afraid of people. And I've never been in the country in the winter. I want to see what it's like.

[PHILIP *surrenders, on this point beaten; but takes up another more seriously*]

PHILIP. Well . . . granted that you don't want a husband . . . it's your obvious duty to make the man help you support his child.

[MISS YATES *is ready for it; serious, too*]

MISS YATES. I daresay. But I won't. I've known other girls in this sort of mess — one or two . . . with everybody being kind to them and sneering at them. And there they sat and cried, and were ashamed of themselves! What's the good of that? And the fellows hating them. Well, I don't want him to hate me. He can forget all about it if he likes . . . and of course he will. I started by crying my eyes out. Then I thought that if I couldn't buck up and anyway pretend to be pleased and jolly well proud, I might as well die. And d'you know when I'd been pretending a bit I found that I really was pleased and proud. . . And I am really proud and happy about it now, sir . . . I am not pretending. I daresay I've done wrong . . . perhaps I ought to come to grief altogether, but —

[*At this moment a telephone in the table rings violently, and* MISS YATES *apologises — to it, apparently*]

MISS YATES, Oh, I beg pardon.

PHILIP. Excuse me. [*Then answering*] Yes. Who? No, no, no. . . State. Mr. State. Put him through. [*He is evidently put through*] Morning! Who? My father . . . not yet. Yes, from Marienbad.

[MISS YATES *gets up, apparently to withdraw tactfully, but looking a little startled, too*]

MISS YATES. Shall I . . .

PHILIP. No, no; it's all right.

[BELHAVEN *knocks, comes in, and stands waiting by* PHILIP, *who telephones on*]

PHILIP. Yes? Well? . . . Who . . . Mark who? . . . Aurelius. No. I've not been reading him lately . . . Certainly I will . . . Thomas is here doing

figures . . . d'you want him . . . I'll put you through. . . . No, wait. I'll call him here, if it's not private. [*Then calling out*] Tommy!

BELHAVEN. Major Thomas is in the counting house, sir.

PHILIP. Oh. [*Then through the telephone*] If you'll hold the line I can get him in a minute. Say Mr. State's on the telephone for him, Belhaven.

BELHAVEN. Yes, sir . . . and Mrs. Madras is below in a taxicab, sir, and would like to speak to you. Shall she come up, or, if you're too busy to be interrupted, will you come down to her?

PHILIP. My mother?

BELHAVEN. No, not Mrs. Madras . . . your Mrs. Madras, sir.

PHILIP. Bring her up. And tell Major Thomas.

BELHAVEN. Yes, sir.

[BELHAVEN *achieves a greased departure, and* PHILIP *turns back to* MISS YATES]

PHILIP. Where were we?

MISS YATES [*inconsequently*]. It is hot in here, isn't it?

PHILIP. The window's open.

MISS YATES. Shall I shut it?

[*She turns and goes up to the window; one would say to run away from him.* PHILIP *watches her steadily*]

PHILIP. What's the matter, Miss Yates?

[*She comes back more collectedly*]

MISS YATES. Oh, I'm sure Miss Chancellor can't expect me to marry one like that now . . . can she?

PHILIP. Marry who?

MISS YATES. Not that I say anything against Mr. Belhaven . . . a very nice young man. And, indeed, I rather think he did try to propose last Christmas. The fact is, y'know, it's only the very young men that ever do ask you to marry them here. When they get older they seem to lose heart . . . or they think it'll cost too much . . . or . . . but anyway, I'm sure it's not important . . .

[*This very out-of-place chatter dies away under* PHILIP'S *sternly enquiring gaze*]

PHILIP. There's one more thing I'm afraid I ought to ask you. This trouble hasn't come about in any way by our sending you up to Bond Street, has it?

MISS YATES [*diving into many words again*]. Oh, of course it was most kind of you to send me to Bond Street to get a polish on one's manners . . . but I tell you . . . I couldn't have stood it for long. Those ladies that you get coming in there . . . well, it does just break your nerve. What with following them about, and the things they say you've got to hear, and the things they'll say . . . about you half the time . . . that you've got not to hear . . . and keep your voice low and sweet, and let your arms hang down straight. You may work more hours in this place, and I daresay it's commoner, but the customers are friendly with you.

PHILIP. . . . Because, you see, Mr. Huxtable and I would feel a little more responsible if it was anyone connected with us who . . .

MISS YATES [*quite desperately*]. No, you needn't . . . indeed you needn't . . . I will say there's something in that other place that does set your mind going about men. What he saw in me I never could think . . . honestly, I couldn't, though I think a good deal of myself, I can assure you. But it was my own fault, and so's all the rest of it going to be . . . my very own . . .

[MAJOR THOMAS'S *arrival is to* MISS YATES *a very welcome interruption, as she seems, perhaps by the hypnotism of* PHILIP'S *steady look, to be getting nearer and nearer to saying just what she means not to. He comes in at a good speed, glancing back along the passage, and saying . . .*]

THOMAS. Here's Jessica.

PHILIP. State on the telephone.

THOMAS. Thank you.

[*And he makes for it as* JESSICA *comes to the open door.* PHILIP'S *wife is an epitome of all that æsthetic culture can do for a woman. More: She is the result — not of thirty-three years — but of three or four generations of cumulative refinement. She might be a race horse! Come to think of it, it is a very wonderful thing to have raised this crop of ladyhood. Creatures, dainty in mind and body, gentle in thought and word, charming, delicate, sensitive, graceful, chaste, credulous of all good, shaming the world's ugliness and strife by the very ease and delightsomeness of their*

existence; fastidious — fastidious — fastidious; also in these latter years with their attractions more generally salted by the addition of learning and humour. Is not the perfect lady perhaps the most wonderful achievement of civilisation, and worth the cost of her breeding, worth the toil and the helotage of — all the others? JESSICA MADRAS *is even something more than a lady, for she is conscious of her ladyhood. She values her virtue and her charm: she is proud of her culture, and fosters it. It is her weapon; it justifies her. As she floats now into the ugly room, exquisite from her eyelashes to her shoes, it is a great relief — just the sight of her*]

JESSICA. Am I interrupting?

PHILIP. No, come in, my dear.

THOMAS [*into the telephone*]. Hullo!

PHILIP. Well, Miss Yates, I want to see, if I can, that you are not more unfairly treated than people with the courage of their opinions always are.

THOMAS. Hullo!

PHILIP. Oh, you don't know my wife. Jessica, this is Miss Yates, who is in our costume room. You're not actually working in your department now, I suppose?

MISS YATES. [*As defiant of all scandal.*] I am.

THOMAS. [*Still to the unresponsive telephone.*] Hullo! Hullo!

PHILIP. [*Finding* MISS YATES *beyond — possibly above him.*] Very well. That'll do now.

[*But* MISS YATES, *by the presence of* JESSICA, *is now brought to her best costume department manner. She can assume at will, it seems, a new face, a new voice; can become, indeed, a black-silk being of another species*]

MISS YATES. Thank you, sir. I'm sure I hope I've not talked too much. I always was a chatterbox, madam.

PHILIP. You had some important things to say, Miss Yates.

MISS YATES. Not at all, sir. Good morning, madam.

JESSICA. Good morning.

[*And there is an end of* MISS YATES. *Meanwhile, the telephone is reducing* THOMAS *to impotent fury*]

THOMAS. They've cut him off.

[*While he turns the handle fit to break it,* JESSICA *produces an opened telegram, which she hands to* PHILIP]

JESSICA. This . . . just after you left.

PHILIP. My dear, coming all this way with it! Why didn't you telephone?

THOMAS [*hearing something at last*]. Hullo . . . is that Mr. State's office? No! Well . . . Counting house, are you still through to it?

[JESSICA *is watching, with an amused smile*]

JESSICA. I hate the telephone, especially the one here. Hark at you, Tommy, poor wretch! They put you through from office to office . . . six different clerks . . . all stupid, and all with hideous voices.

[PHILIP *has now read his telegram, and is making a face*]

PHILIP. Well, I suppose she must come, if she wants to.

JESSICA. What'll your father say?

PHILIP. My dear girl . . . she has a right to see him if she insists . . . it's very foolish. Here, Tommy! [*He ousts him from the telephone and deals expertly with it*] I want a telegram sent. Get double three double O Central, and plug through to my room . . . not here . . . my room.

THOMAS [*fervently*]. Thank yer.

JESSICA. Got over your anger at the play last night?

THOMAS. Oh, sort of play you must expect if you go to the theatre on a Sunday. Scuse me.

[*Having admiringly sized up* JESSICA *and her costume, he bolts.* PHILIP *sits down to compose his telegram in reply.* JESSICA, *discovering that there is nothing attractive to sit on, hovers*]

PHILIP. Can you put her up for the night?

JESSICA. Yes.

PHILIP. Shall I ask her to dinner?

JESSICA. She'll cry into the soup . . . but I suppose it doesn't matter.

PHILIP. Dinner at eight?

JESSICA. I sound inhospitable.

PHILIP. Well, I've only said we shall be delighted.

JESSICA. But your mother dislikes me so. It's difficult to see much of her.

PHILIP. You haven't much patience with her, have you, Jessica?

JESSICA. Have you?

PHILIP [*whimsically*]. I've known her longer than you have.

JESSICA [*with the nicest humour*]. I only wish she wouldn't write Mildred silly letters about God.

PHILIP. A grandmother's privilege.

JESSICA. The child sends me on another one this morning . . . did I tell you?

PHILIP. No.

JESSICA. Miss Gresham writes, too. She puts it quite nicely. But it's an awful thing for a school to get religion into it.

[BELHAVEN *slides in*]

BELHAVEN. Yessir.

PHILIP. Send this at once, please.

BELHAVEN. Yessir.

[BELHAVEN *slides out. Then* PHILIP *starts attending to the little pile of letters he brought in with him.* JESSICA, *neglected, hovers more widely*]

JESSICA. Will you come out to lunch, Phil?

PHILIP. Lord! is it lunch time?

JESSICA. It will be soon. I'm lunching with Margaret Inman and Walter Muirhead at the Dieudonné.

PHILIP. Then you won't be lonely.

JESSICA [*mischievous*]. Margaret may be if you don't come.

PHILIP. I can't, Jessica. I'm not nearly through.

[*She comes to rest by his table, and starts to play with the things on it, finding at last a blotting roller that gives satisfaction*]

JESSICA. Phil, you might come out with me a little more than you do.

PHILIP [*humorously final*]. My dear, not at lunch time.

JESSICA. Ugly little woman you'd been scolding when I came in.

PHILIP. I didn't think so.

JESSICA. Are ugly women as attractive as ugly men?

PHILIP. D'you know . . . I don't find that women attract me.

JESSICA. What a husband!

PHILIP. D'you want them to?

JESSICA. Yes . . . in theory.

PHILIP. Why, Jessica?

JESSICA [*with charming finesse*]. For my own sake. Last day of Walter's pictures. He has sold all but about five . . . and there's one I wish you'd buy.

PHILIP. Can't afford it.

JESSICA. I suppose, Phil, you're not altogether sorry you married me?

[*Although* PHILIP *is used enough to her charming and reasoned inconsequence, he really jumps*]

PHILIP. Good heavens, Jessica! Well, we've got through eleven years, haven't we?

[JESSICA *puts her head on one side and is quite half serious*]

JESSICA. Are you in the least glad you married me?

PHILIP. My dear . . . I don't think about it. Jessica, I cannot keep up this game of repartee.

[*She floats away at once, half seriously snubbed and hurt*]

JESSICA. I'm sorry. I know I'm interrupting.

PHILIP [*remorseful at once, for she is so pretty*]. No, no! I didn't mean that. These aren't important.

[*But he goes on with his letters, and* JESSICA *stands looking at him, her face hardening a little*]

JESSICA. But there are times when I get tired of waiting for you to finish your letters.

PHILIP. I know . . . I never quite finish my letters now-a-days. You've got a fit of the idle-fidgets this morning . . . that's what brings you after me. Shall we hire a motor car for the week-end?

[THOMAS *bundles into the tête-à-tête, saying as he comes . . .*]

THOMAS. He'll make you an offer for the place here, Phil.

PHILIP. Good!

[JESSICA *stands there, looking her prettiest*]

JESSICA. Tommy, come out and lunch . . . Phil won't.

THOMAS. I'm afraid I can't.

JESSICA. I've got to meet Maggie Inman and young Muirhead. He'll flirt with her all the time. If there isn't a fourth I shall be fearfully in the cold.

PHILIP [*overcome by such tergiversation*]. Oh, Jessica!

[THOMAS *is nervous, apparently; at least he is neither ready nor gallant*]

THOMAS. Yes, of course you will. But I'm afraid I can't.

JESSICA [*in cheerful despair*]. Well, I won't drive to Peckham again of a morning. Wednesday, then, will you call for me?

THOMAS. Wednesday?

JESSICA. Symphony Concert.

THOMAS [*with sudden seriousness*]. D'you know, I'm afraid I can't on Wednesday, either.

JESSICA. Why not?

THOMAS [*though the pretence withers before a certain sharpness in her question*]. Well . . . I'm afraid I can't.

[*It is evident that* JESSICA *has a temper bred to a point of control which makes it nastier, perhaps. She now becomes very cold, very civil, very swift*]

JESSICA. We settled it only last night. What's the time?

PHILIP. Five to one.

JESSICA. I must go. I shall be late.

THOMAS [*with great concern*]. Have you got a cab?

JESSICA. I think so.

THOMAS. We might do the next, perhaps.

JESSICA. All right, Tommy . . . don't be conscience-stricken. But when you change your mind about going out with me it's pleasanter if you'll find some excuse. Good-bye, you two.

[*And she is gone;* PHILIP *calling after her* —]

PHILIP. I shall be in by seven, my dear.

[THOMAS *looks a little relieved, and then considerably worried; in fact, he frowns portentously.* PHILIP *disposes of his last letter*]

PHILIP. We've so organised the world's work as to make companionship between men and women a very artificial thing.

THOMAS [*without interest*]. Have we?

PHILIP. I think so. What have we got to settle before this afternoon?

THOMAS. Nothing much. [*Then seeming to make up his mind to something*] But I want three minutes' talk with you, old man.

PHILIP. Oh!

[*And he gets up and stretches*]

THOMAS. D'you mind if I say something caddish?

PHILIP. No.

THOMAS. Put your foot down and don't have me asked to your house quite so much.

[PHILIP *looks at him for half a puzzled minute*]

PHILIP. Why not?

THOMAS. I'm seeing too much of your wife.

[*He is so intensely solemn about it that* PHILIP *can hardly even pretend to be shocked*]

PHILIP. My dear Tommy!

THOMAS. I don't mean one single word more than I say.

PHILIP [*good-naturedly*]. Tommy, you always have flirted with Jessica.

THOMAS. I don't want you to think that I'm the least bit in love with her.

PHILIP. Naturally not . . . you've got a wife of your own.

THOMAS [*in intense brotherly agreement*]. Right. That's good horse sense.

PHILIP. And though, as her husband, I'm naturally obtuse in the matter . . . I really don't think that Jessica is in love with you.

THOMAS [*most generously*]. Not for a single minute.

PHILIP. Then what's the worry, you silly old ass?

[THOMAS *starts to explain, a little tortuously*]

THOMAS. Well, Phil, this is such a damned subtle world. I don't pretend to understand it, but in my old age I have got a sort of rule-of-thumb experience to go by . . . which, mark you, I've paid for.

PHILIP. Well?

THOMAS. Phil, I don't like women, and I never did . . . but I'm hardly exaggerating when I say I married simply to get out of the habit of finding myself once every six months in such a position with one of them that I was supposed to be making love to her.

[PHILIP *is enjoying himself*]

PHILIP. What do they see in you, Tommy?

THOMAS. God knows, old man . . . I don't. And the time it took up! Of course I was as much in love with Mary as you like, or I couldn't have asked her to marry me. And I wouldn't be without her and the children now for all I ever saw. But I don't believe I'd have gone out of my way to get them if I hadn't been driven to it, old man, . . . driven to it. I'm not going to start the old game again now.

[*And he wags his head wisely*]

PHILIP. What's the accusation against Jessica? Let's have it in so many words.

[THOMAS *gathers himself up to launch the vindicating compliment effectively*]

THOMAS. She's a very accomplished and a very charming and a very sweet-natured woman. I consider she's an ornament to society.

PHILIP [*with equal fervour*]. You're quite right, Tommy, . . . what are we to do with them?

THOMAS [*it's his favourite phrase*]. What d'you mean?

PHILIP. Well . . . what's your trouble with her?

THOMAS [*tortuously still*]. There ain't any yet . . . but . . . well . . . I've been dreading for the last three weeks that Jessica would begin to talk to me about you. That's why I'm talking to you about her. [*Then, with a certain enjoyment of his shocking looseness of behaviour*] I am a cad!

PHILIP [*still amused — but now rather sub-acidly*]. My standing for the County Council must be a most dangerous topic.

THOMAS. But that's just how it begins. Then there's hints . . . quite nice ones . . . about how you get on with each other. Last night in the cab she was talking about when she was a girl . . .

PHILIP. I walked home. Tactful husband!

THOMAS. Phil . . . don't you be French.

[PHILIP, *suddenly serious, turns to him*]

PHILIP. But, Tommy, do you imagine that she is unhappy with me?

THOMAS. No, I don't. But she thinks a lot . . . when she's bored with calling on people, and her music and her pictures. And once you begin putting your feelings into words . . . why, they grow.

PHILIP. But if she were, I'd rather that she did confide in you.

[THOMAS *shakes his head vehemently*]

THOMAS. No.

PHILIP. Why shouldn't she? You're friends.

THOMAS. Yes . . . there's no reason . . . but I tell you it always begins that way.

PHILIP. You silly ass . . . can't you let a woman talk seriously to you without making love to her?

THOMAS. Damn it, that's what they say . . . but it never made any difference.

PHILIP. Tommy, you're a perfect child!

THOMAS. I remember when I was twenty-four . . . there was one woman . . . years older than me . . . had a grown-up son. She took to scolding me for wasting my time flirting. Told me she'd done it herself once . . . then told me why she'd done it. I kept off kissing her for six weeks, and I'll swear she never wanted me to kiss her. But I did.

PHILIP. Did she box your ears?

THOMAS. No . . . she said she couldn't take me seriously. Well . . . if I'd gone away that would have been priggish. And if I'd stayed I'd have done it again.

PHILIP [*mischievously*]. Which did you do?

THOMAS. Oh . . . never you mind.

PHILIP [*with the utmost geniality*]. Well . . . you have my permission to kiss Jessica, if you think she wants you to.

THOMAS. Thanks, old man . . . that's very clever and up to date, and all the rest of it . . . but I asked you to chuck me out of the house to some extent.

PHILIP. I'm not going to.

THOMAS. Then you're no friend of mine.

PHILIP. Let us put it quite brutally. If Jessica chooses to be unfaithful to me how am I to stop her . . . even if I've the right to stop her?

THOMAS. If you're not prepared to behave like a decent married man you've no right to be married . . . you're a danger.

PHILIP. Also, Tommy, if you caught me making love to your wife you might talk to me . . . but you wouldn't talk to her about it.

THOMAS [*with a touch of sentiment*]. Mary's different. [*Then protesting again*] And I'm not making love to your wife. I told you so.

PHILIP. Then if she's making love to you, run away for yourself.

THOMAS. She isn't making love to me. But if you can't take a hint —

PHILIP. A hint! Well . . . I'm dashed!

THOMAS. Well, old man, I give you fair warning of the sort of fool I am . . . and I'll take no more responsibility in the matter.

PHILIP [*in comic desperation*]. Don't warn me . . . warn Jessica. Tell her you're afraid of making a fool of yourself with her. . . .

Thomas [*his eyebrows up*]. But that'd be as good as doing it. Good Lord, you can't behave towards women as if they were men!

Philip. Why not?

Thomas. You try it.

Philip. I always do.

Thomas. No wonder she wants to grumble about you to me.

[Philip *takes him seriously again*]

Philip. Look here, Tommy, I know Jessica pretty well. She doesn't want to be made love to.

Thomas [*positively and finally*]. Yes, she does. [*Then with real chivalry*] I don't mean that unpleasantly . . . but all women do. Some of em want to be kissed and some want you to talk politics . . . but the principle's the same.

Philip [*finely contemptuous*]. What a world you live in!

Thomas. . . . And the difficulty with me is that if I try to talk politics I find they don't know enough about it . . . or else that they know too much about it . . . and it's simpler to kiss em and have done.

Philip. Oh, much simpler!

Thomas [*back to his starting point — pathetic*]. But I'm married now, and I want a quiet life . . .

[*A knock at the door interrupts him*]

Philip. Come in.

[*It is* Belhaven]

Belhaven. Will you lunch, sir?

Philip. What is there?

Belhaven. I'm afraid only the Usual, sir.

Philip. Can you manage the Usual, Tommy? What is it, Belhaven?

Belhaven. Boiled mutton and a jam pudding, I think, sir. [*Then as confessing to a vulgarity*] Roly-poly.

Thomas [*with great approval*]. Right. I hope it's strawberry jam.

Philip. Sure to be. Put it in Mr. Huxtable's room, will you . . . that's airy.

Belhaven. Yessir.

[Belhaven *vanishes*]

Thomas [*as on reflection*]. Not plum, y'know . . . plum's no use.

[Philip *gathers up his papers*]

Philip. I'll give the wicked woman your message.

[Thomas *takes alarm. He hadn't thought of this*]

Thomas. No . . . do it off your own bat. She won't mind, then.

Philip. Tommy, I cannot assume the turban of the Turk. My sense of humour and my sense of decency towards women won't let me.

Thomas [*frowning*]. I believe I'd better not have told you.

Philip [*unsympathetic*]. Why not? Next to telling her, the most common-sense thing to do.

Thomas. She won't think so.

Philip. She'll have to.

[*There is something so like cruelty in these three words that* Thomas *stares at him. Then he says, reflectively*]

Thomas. Phil, d'you ever thank God you're not a woman?

Philip. No.

Thomas. When I think what most of em have to choose between is soft-hearted idiots like me and hard-headed devils like you . . . I wonder they put up with us as they do.

[Philip *stares at him in turn with a queer smile. Then, as he turns to go . . .*]

Philip. You've made it again, Tommy.

Thomas. What?

Philip. Your one sensible remark. Come along.

[*And he is gone.* Thomas *follows, protesting*]

Thomas. Look here . . . what d'you mean by One Sensible Remark? It's like your infernal . . .

[*He pulls the door to after him. The room is alone with its ugliness*]

ACT III

In 1884 the Madras House was moved to its present premises in Bond Street. In those days decoration was mostly a matter of paint and wall-paper, but Mr. Constantine Madras, *ever daring, proceeded to beautify the home of his professional triumphs. He could neither draw nor colour, but he designed and saw to it all himself, and being a man of great force of character, produced something which, though extraordinarily wrong, was yet, since it was sincere, in a way effective. It added to his*

reputation and to the attractiveness of the Madras House.

In twenty-six years there have been changes, but one room remains untouched from then till now. This is the rotunda, a large, lofty, skylighted place, done in the Moorish style. The walls are black marble to the height of a man, and from there to the ceiling the darkest red. The ceiling is of a cerulean blue, and in the middle of the skylight a golden sun, with spiked rays proceeding from its pleasant human countenance, takes credit for some of the light it intercepts. An archway with fretted top leads from the rest of the establishment. Another has behind it a platform, a few steps high, hung with black velvet. The necessary fireplace (were there hot-water pipes in 1884?) is disguised by a heavy multi-coloured canopy, whose fellow hangs over a small door opposite. On the floor is a Persian carpet of some real beauty. On the walls are gas brackets (1884 again!) the oriental touch achieved in their crescent shape. Round the wall are divans, many cushioned; in front of them little coffee-stools. It is all about as Moorish as Baker Street Station, but the general effect is humorous, pleasant, and even not undignified.

In the old, grand days of the Madras House the rotunda was the happy preserve of very special customers, those on whom the great man himself would keep an eye. If you had been there you spoke of it casually; indeed, to be free of the rotunda was to be a well-dressed woman and recognised by all society as such. Ichabod! Since MR. CONSTANTINE MADRAS *retired, the Madras House is on the way to becoming almost like any other shop; the special customers are nobody in particular, and the rotunda is where a degenerate management meet to consider the choice of ready-made models from Paris. A large oval table had to be imported and half a dozen Moorish chairs. It seemed, to the surprise of the gentleman who went innocently ordering such things, that there were only that number in existence. Scene of its former glories, this is now to be the scene, perhaps, of the passing of the Madras House into alien hands.*

Three o'clock on the Monday afternoon is when the deal is to be put through, if possible, and it is now five minutes to. MAJOR THOMAS *is there, sitting at the table; papers spread before him, racking his brains at a few final figures.* PHILIP *is there, in rather a school-boyish mood. He is sitting on the table, swinging his legs.* MR. HUXTABLE *is there, too, dressed in his best, important and nervous, and he is talking to* MR. EUSTACE PERRIN STATE.

MR. STATE *is an American, and if American magazine literature is anything to go by, no American is altogether unlike him. He has a rugged, blood-and-iron sort of face, utterly belied by his soft, smiling eyes; rightly belied, too, for he has made his thirty or forty millions in the gentlest way — as far as he knows. You would not think of him as a money-maker. As a matter of fact, he has no love of money, and little use for it, for his tastes are simple. But money-making is the honourable career in his own country, and he has the instinct for turning money over and the knack of doing so on a big scale. His shock of grey hair makes him look older than he probably is; his voice is almost childlike in its sweetness. He has the dignity and aptitude for command that power can give.*

From the little canopied dome comes MR. WINDLESHAM, *present manager of the establishment. He is a tailor-made man; and the tailor only left off for the wax modeller and wig-maker to begin. For his clothes are too perfect to be worn by anything but a dummy, and his hair and complexion are far from human. Not that he dyes or paints them; no, they were made like that. His voice is a little inhuman, too, and as he prefers the French language, with which he has a most unripe acquaintance, to his own, and so speaks English as much like French as his French is like English, his conversation seems as unreal as the rest of him. Impossible to think of him in any of the ordinary relations of life. He is a functionary. Nature, the great inventor, will evolve, however roughly, what is necessary for her uses. Millinery*

has evolved the man-milliner. As he comes in — and he has the gait of a water-wagtail — MR. HUXTABLE *is making conversation.*

MR. HUXTABLE. A perfect barometer, as you might say — when your eye gets used to it.

WINDLESHAM. [*To* PHILIP, *and with a wag of his head back to the other room*] They're just ready.

MR. STATE [*smiling benevolently at* MR. HUXTABLE]. Is it really? The Crystal Palace! But what a sound that has!

MR. HUXTABLE [*with modest pride*]. And a very ealthy locality!

PHILIP. Come along and meet State.

[*He jumps off the table, capturing* WINDLESHAM'S *arm*]

MR. STATE [*enthusiastic*]. Denmark Hill. Compliment to Queen Alexandra!

MR. HUXTABLE [*struck by the information*]. Was it, now?

MR. STATE. Herne Hill . . . Herne the Hunter! That's the charm of London to an American. Association. Every spot speaks.

PHILIP [*as he joins them*]. This is Mr. Windlesham . . . our manager. He's going to show us some new models.

[MR. STATE *impressively extends a hand and repeats the name*]

MR. STATE. Mr. Windlesham.

WINDLESHAM. Most happy. I thought you'd like to see the very latest . . . brought them from Paris only yesterday.

MR. STATE. Most opportune! [*Then with a sweeping gesture*]. Mr. Philip, this room inspires me. Your father's design?

PHILIP. Yes.

MR. STATE. I thought so.

PHILIP. That used to be his private office.

MR. STATE [*reverently*]. Indeed! Where the Duchess went on her knees! An historic spot. Interesting to me!

PHILIP. Something of a legend that.

[MR. STATE, *intensely solemn, seems now to ascend the pulpit of some philosophic conventicle*]

MR. STATE. I believe in legends, sir . . . they are the spiritual side of facts. They go to form tradition. And it is not given to man to found his institutions in security of mind except upon tradition. That is why our eyes turn eastward to you from America, Mr. Huxtable.

MR. HUXTABLE [*in some awe*]. Do they, now?

MR. STATE. Has it never struck you that while the progress of man has been in the path of the sun, his thoughts continually go back to the place of its rising? I have at times found it a very illuminating idea.

PHILIP [*not indecently commonplace*]. Well, have them in now, Windlesham, while we're waiting.

WINDLESHAM. You might cast your eyes over these new girls, Mr. Philip . . . the very best I could find, I do assure you. Faces are hard enough to get, but figures . . . Well, there! [*Reaching the little door, he calls through*] Allons Mes'moiselles! Non . . . non . . . par l'autre porte et à la gauche. [*Then back again*] You get the best effect through a big doorway. [*He further explains this by sketching one in the air*] One, two and four first.

[*He exhibits some costume drawings he has been carrying, distributes one or two, and then vanishes into the other room, from which his voice vibrates*]

WINDLESHAM. En avant, s'il vous plaît. Numéro un! Eh bien . . . numéro trois. Non, Ma'moiselle, ce n'est pas commode . . . regardez ce corsage-là . . .

MR. HUXTABLE [*making a face*]. What I'm always thinking is, why not have a manly chap in charge of the place up here.

MR. STATE [*with perfect justice*]. Mr. Windlesham may be said to strike a note. Whether it is a right note . . .?

[*Through the big doorway* WINDLESHAM *ushers in a costume from Paris, the very last word in discreet and costly finery, delicate in colour, fragile in texture; a creation. This is hung upon a young lady of pleasing appearance, pre-occupied with its exhibition, which she achieves by slow and sinuous, never-ceasing movements. She glides into the room. She wears a smile also*]

WINDLESHAM. One and two are both Larguillière, Mr. Philip. He can't get in the Soupçon Anglais, can he? Won't . . . I tell him. Promenez et sortez, Ma'moiselle.

[*The young lady, still smiling and sinuous, begins to circle the room. She seems to be unconscious of its inhabitants,*

and they, in return, rather dreadfully pretend not to notice her, but only the costume]

WINDLESHAM. Numéro Deux.

[*Another costume, rakishly inclined, with a hat deliberately hideous. The young lady contained in them is again slow and sinuous and vacantly smiling*]

WINDLESHAM. But this is chic, isn't it? Promenez.

MR. STATE [*in grave enquiry*]. What is the Soupçon Anglais?

PHILIP. A Frenchman will tell you that for England you must first make a design and then spoil it.

THOMAS [*whose attention has been rivetted*]. Don't they speak English?

WINDLESHAM. Oh, pas un mot . . . I mean, not a word. Only came over with me yesterday . . . these three.

THOMAS. Because this frock's a bit thick, y'know.

WINDLESHAM. Numéro Trois!

[*A third costume, calculated to have an innocent effect. The accompanying young lady, with a sense of fitness, wears a pout instead of a smile*]

PHILIP. What's this?

[*His eye is on the surmounting hat of straw*]

WINDLESHAM [*with a little crow of delight*]. That's the new hat. La belle Hélène again!

MR. STATE [*interested, still grave*]. La belle Hélène. A Parisian firm?

WINDLESHAM [*turning this to waggish account*]. Well . . . dear me . . . you can almost call her that, can't you? [*Suddenly he dashes at the costume and brings it to a standstill*] Oh, mon Dieu, Ma'moiselle! La gorgette . . . vous l'avez dérangé.

[*He proceeds to arrange la gorgette to his satisfaction, also some other matters which seem to involve a partial evisceration of the underclothing. The young lady, passive, pouts perseveringly. He is quite unconscious of her separate existence. But* THOMAS *is considerably shocked, and whispers violently to* PHILIP]

THOMAS. I say, he shouldn't pull her about like that.

WINDLESHAM [*skipping back to admire the result*]. Là . . . comme ça.

[*The costume continues its round; the others are still circling, veering and tacking, while* WINDLESHAM *trips admiringly around and about them. It all looks like some dance of modish dervishes*]

PHILIP [*heartlessly*]. La belle Hélène, Mr. State, is a well-known Parisian cocotte . . . who sets many of the fashions which our wives and daughters afterwards assume.

MR. HUXTABLE [*scandalised*]. Don't say that, Phil; it's not nice.

PHILIP. Why?

MR. HUXTABLE. I'm sure no ladies are aware of it.

PHILIP. But what can be more natural and right than for the professional charmer to set the pace for the amateur!

WINDLESHAM [*pausing in the dance*]. Quite la haute cocotterie, of course.

MR. STATE [*solemnly*]. Do you infer, Mr. Madras, a difference in degree, but not in kind?

PHILIP [*courteously echoing his tone*]. I do.

MR. STATE. That is a very far-reaching observation, sir.

PHILIP. It is.

THOMAS. Do you know the lady personally, Mr. Windlesham?

[WINDLESHAM *turns, with some tag of a costume in his hand, thus unconsciously detaining the occupier*]

WINDLESHAM. Oh, no . . . oh, dear me, no . . . quite the reverse, I do assure you. There's nothing gay in Paris to me. I was blasé long ago.

MR. STATE. But touching that hat, Mr. Windlesham.

WINDLESHAM. Oh, to be sure. Attendez, mademoiselle.

[*Tiptoeing, he dexterously tilts the straw hat from the elaborate head it is perched on*]

WINDLESHAM. It's not a bad story. Sortez.

[*By this two costumes have glided out. The third follows.* STATE, *who has found it hard to keep his eyes off them, gives something of a sigh*]

MR. STATE. If they'd only just smile or wink I might get over the extraordinary feeling it gives me.

[WINDLESHAM, *caressing the hat, takes up an attitude for his story*]

WINDLESHAM. Well . . . it appears that a while ago, out at the Pré Cathelan

. . . there was Hélène, taking her afternoon cup of buttermilk. What should she see but Madame Erlancourt . . . one knows enough about that lady, of course . . . in a hat the very twin of hers . . . the very twin. Well . . . you can imagine! Someone had blundered.

MR. STATE [*absorbed*]. No, I don't follow.

PHILIP. Some spy in the service of that foreign power had procured and parted with the plans of the hat.

MR. STATE. Madame What's-her-name might have seen it on her before, and copied it.

PHILIP. Mr. State, Hélène doesn't wear a hat twice.

MR. STATE. My mistake!

WINDLESHAM. So there was a terrible scene . . .

THOMAS. With madame . . . ?

WINDLESHAM [*repudiating any such vulgarity*]. Oh, no. Hélène just let fly at her chaperon, she being at hand, so to speak.

MR. STATE [*dazzled*]. Her what! [*Then with humorous awe*] No, I beg your pardon . . . go on . . . go on.

WINDLESHAM. She took off her own hat . . . pinned it on the head of the ugliest little gamine she could find, and sent the child walking along the grass in it. Then she sent to the kitchens for one of those baskets they bring the fish in . . . [*He twirls the hat*] . . . you see. Then she ripped a yard of lace off her underskirt and twisted it round. Then she took off both her . . . well . . . La Belle France, you know . . . there is something in the atmosphere! It was her garters she took off . . . blue silk.

MR. STATE [*Puritan*]. In public?

WINDLESHAM [*professional*]. Oh, . . . it can be done. Hooked them together and fastened the bit of lace round the basket this way. Très simple! That's what she wore the rest of the afternoon and back to Paris. This is what's going to be the rage.

[*Having deftly pantomimed this creation of a fashion, he hands the hat, with an air, to* MR. STATE, *who examines it.* PHILIP *is smilingly caustic*]

PHILIP. La belle Hélène has imagination, Mr. State. She is also, I am told, thrifty, inclined to religion, a vegetarian, Vichy water her only beverage; in fact, a credit to her profession and externally . . . to ours.

[MR. STATE *hands back the hat, with the solemnest humour*]

MR. STATE. Mr. Windlesham, I am much obliged to you for this illuminating anecdote.

WINDLESHAM. Not at all. . . . Will you see the other three?

MR. STATE. By all means.

WINDELSHAM. They won't be long in changing . . . but there's one I must just pin on.

MR. STATE. No hurry.

[*He has acquired a new joy in* WINDLESHAM, *whom he watches dance away. Then a song is heard from the next room . . .*]

WINDLESHAM. Allons . . . numéro cinq . . . numéro sept . . . numéro dix. Ma'moiselle Ollivier . . . vous vous mettrez . . .

[*And the door closes.* PHILIP *looks at his watch*]

PHILIP. But it's ten past three. We'd better not wait for my father.

[*They surround the table and sit down*]

MR. STATE. Major Thomas, have you my memoranda?

THOMAS. Here.

[*He hands them to* STATE, *who clears his throat, refrains from spitting, and begins the customary American oration*]

MR. STATE. The scheme, gentlemen, for which I desire to purchase the Madras House and add it to the interest of the Burrows enterprise, which I already control, is — to put it shortly — this. The Burrows provincial scheme — you are aware of its purpose — goes well enough as far as the shareholding by the local drapery stores is concerned. It has been interesting to me to discover which aspects of the Burrows scheme suit which cities . . . and why. An absorbing problem in the psychology of local conditions! Now, we have eliminated from the mass a considerable number of cases where the local people will not join with us. And in your Leicesters and Norwiches and Plymouths and Coventrys . . . there the unknown name, the uninspiring name of Burrows, upon a fire-new establishment next door might anyhow be ineffective. But beyond that I have a reason . . . and I hope a not uninteresting reason, to put before you gentlemen . . . why it is in these provincial centres that we should look to establish our Madras Houses . . . New Edition. Is that clear so far?

[*During this* Mr. Constantine Madras *has arrived. He turned aside for a moment to the door that the models came from, now he joins the group. A man of sixty, to whom sixty is the prime of life. Tall, quite dramatically dignified, suave, a little remote; he is one of those to whom life is an art of which they have determined to be master. It is a handsome face, Eastern in type, the long beard only streaked with grey. He does not dress like the ruck of men, because he is not of them. The velvet coat, brick-red tie, shepherd's-plaid trousers, white spats and patent boots, both suit him and express him subtly and well — the mixture of sensuous originality and tradition which is the man.* Philip *is purposely casual in greeting him; he has sighted him first. But* Mr. State *gets up, impressed. It is part of his creed to recognise greatness; he insists on recognising it*]

Philip. Hullo, Father!

Mr. State. Mr. Madras! Proud to meet you again.

Constantine [*graciously, without emotion*]. How do you do, Mr. State.

Philip. You know everyone, Father. Oh . . . Hippisly Thomas.

Constantine [*just as graciously*]. How do you do, sir. [*Then, with a mischievous smile, he pats* Huxtable *on the shoulder*] How are you, my dear Harry?

[Mr. Huxtable *had heard him coming, and felt himself turn purple. This was the great meeting after thirty years! He had let it come upon him unawares; purposely let it, for indeed he had not known what to say or do. He had dreaded having the inspiration to say or do anything. Now, alas, and thank goodness! it is too late. He is at a suitable disadvantage. He need only grunt out sulkily . . .*]

Mr. Huxtable. I'm quite well, thank you.

[Constantine, *with one more pat in pardon for the rudeness, goes to his chair*]

Mr. State. A pleasant trip on the Continent?

Constantine. Instructive. Don't let me interrupt business. I shall pick up the thread.

Mr. State [*serving up a little rewarmed oration*]. I was just proceeding to place on the table-cloth some preliminary details of the scheme that has been elaborating since our meeting in June last to consolidate your name and fame in some of the most important cities of England. We had not got far.

[*He consults his notes.* Constantine *produces from a case a slender cigarette holder of amber*]

Constantine. You've some new models, Phil.

Philip. Yes.

Constantine. The tall girl looks well enough. May I smoke?

Mr. State. Allow me.

[*Whipping out his cigar case*]

Constantine. A cigarette, thank you, of my own.

[*He proceeds to make and light one.* Mr. State *offers cigars generally, and then places one to his own hand*]

Mr. State. I occasionally derive some pleasure from a cold cigar. I was not for the moment entering upon the finance of the matter because I entertain no doubt that . . . possibly with a little adjustment of the proportion of shares and cash . . . that can be fixed.

Mr. Huxtable [*in emulation of all this ease and grace*]. I'll ave a cigarette, Phil . . . if you've got one.

[Philip *has one. And every one makes himself comfortable, while* Mr. State *continues enjoyably . . .*]

Mr. State. And I suspect that you are no more interested in money than I am, Mr. Madras. Anyone can make money, if he has capital enough. The little that I have came from lumber and canned peaches. Now, there was poetry in lumber. The virgin forest . . . I'd go sit in it for weeks at a time. There was poetry in peaches . . . before they were canned. Do you wonder why I bought that mantle establishment in the city?

Philip [*who is only sorry that sometime he must stop*]. Why, Mr. State?

Mr. State. Because, Mr. Philip, I found myself a lonely man. I felt the need of getting into touch with what Goethe refers to as the woman-spirit . . . drawing us ever upward and on. That opportunity occurred, and it

seemed a businesslike way of doing the trick.

CONSTANTINE [*through a little cloud of smoke*]. And satisfying?

MR. STATE. I beg your pardon?

CONSTANTINE. Has the ready-made skirt business satisfied your craving for the eternal feminine?

MR. STATE. Mr. Madras . . . that sarcasm is deserved . . . No, sir, it has not. The Burrows business, I discover, lacks all inner meaning . . . it has no soul. A business can no more exist without a soul than a human being can. I'm sure I have you with me there, Mr. Huxtable.

[*Poor* MR. HUXTABLE *quite chokes at the suddenness of this summons, but shines his best*]

MR. HUXTABLE. I should say so, quite.

[MR. STATE *begins to glow*]

MR. STATE. There was fun, mind you . . . there still is . . . in making these provincial milliners hop . . . putting a pistol to their heads . . . saying Buy our Goods or be Froze Out. That keeps me lively and it wakes them up . . . does them good. But Burrows isn't in the Movement. The Woman's Movement. The Great Modern Woman's Movement. It has come home to me that the man, who has as much to do with Woman as manufacturing the bones of her corsets and yet is not consciously in that Movement is Outside History. Shovelling goods over a counter and adding up profits . . . that's no excuse for cumbering the earth . . . nothing personal, Mr. Huxtable.

[MR. HUXTABLE *is ready this time*]

MR. HUXTABLE. No, no . . . I'm listening to you. I'm not too old to learn.

MR. STATE. Mind, I don't say I haven't taken pleasure in Burrows. We've had Notions . . . caused two Ideas to spring where one sprung before. There was Nottingham.

MR. HUXTABLE. I know Nottingham . . . got a shop there?

MR. STATE [*with wholesome pride*]. In two years the Burrows establishment in Nottingham has smashed competition. I've not visited the city myself. The notion was our local manager's. Simple. The Ladies' department served by gentlemen . . . the Gentlemen's by ladies. Always, of course, within the bounds of delicacy. Do you think there is nothing in that, Mr. Huxtable?

MR. HUXTABLE [*round-eyed and open-mouthed*]. Oh . . . well . . .

MR. STATE. But are you the Mean Sensual Man?

MR. HUXTABLE [*whose knowledge of the French language hardly assists him to this startling translation*]. No . . . I hope not.

MR. STATE. Put yourself in his place. Surrounded by pretty girls . . . good girls, mind you . . . high class. Pay them well . . . let them live out . . . pay for their mothers and chaperons, if necessary. Well . . . Surrounded by Gracious Womanhood, does the Sensual Man forget how much money he is spending or does he not? Does he come again? Is it a little Oasis in the desert of his business day? Is it a better attraction than Alcohol, or is it not?

PHILIP [*bitingly*]. Is it?

MR. STATE. Then, sir . . . Audi Alteram Partem. I should like you to see our Ladies' Fancy Department at its best . . . just before the football season.

PHILIP. I think I do!

MR. STATE. Athletes everyone of em . . . not a man under six foot . . . bronzed, noble fellows! And no flirting allowed . . . no making eyes . . . no pandering to anything Depraved. Just the Ordinary Courtesies of our Modern Civilisation from Pure, Clean-minded Gentlemen towards any of the Fair Sex who step in to buy a shilling sachet or the like. And pay, sir . . . The women come in flocks!

MR. HUXTABLE [*bereft of breath*]. Is this how you mean to run your new Madras Houses?

MR. STATE. Patience, Mr. Huxtable. It's but six months ago that I started to study the Woman Question from the point of view of Burrows and Co. I attended women's meetings in London, in Manchester, and in one-horse places as well. Now, Political claims were but the narrowest, drabbest aspect of the matter as I saw it. The Woman's Movement is Woman expressing herself. Let us look at things as they are. What are a Woman's chief means . . . how often her only means of expressing herself? Anyway . . . what is the first thing that she spends her money on? Clothes, gentlemen, clothes. Therefore, I say . . . though at Cannon Street we

may palp with good ideas . . . the ready-made skirt is out of date . . .

[WINDLESHAM, *pins in his mouth, fashion plates under his arm, and the fish-basket hat in his hand, shoots out of the other room*]

WINDLESHAM. Will you have the others in now? [*Then back through the door*] Allons, Mesmoiselles, si vous plaît. Numéro cinq le premier. [*Then he turns the hat upside down on the table*] I thought you'd like to see that they've actually left the handles on. But I don't think we can do that here, do you?

[*There comes in as before the most elaborate evening gown that ever was*]

WINDLESHAM [*as he searches for the design*]. Numero cinq . . . number five.

[THOMAS *is much struck*]

THOMAS. I say . . . by Jove!

[*But the cold, searching light seems to separate from the glittering pink affair the poor, pretty, smiling creature exhibiting it, until, indeed, she seems half naked.* MR. WINDLESHAM'S *æsthetic sense is outraged*]

WINDLESHAM. Mais non, mais non . . . pas en plein jour. Mettez-vous par là dans le . . . dans l'alcove . . . à côté du velours noir.

[*The costume undulates towards the black velvet platform.* THOMAS *is lost in admiration*]

THOMAS. That gives her a chance, doesn't it? Damn pretty girl!

PHILIP [*his eye twinkling*]. She'll understand that, Tommy.

THOMAS [*in good faith*]. She won't mind.

MR. STATE [*who has been studying the undulations*]. How they learn to walk like it . . . that's what beats me!

[MR. WINDLESHAM *turns on the frame of lights which bear upon the velvet platform. The vision of female loveliness is now complete*]

WINDLESHAM. There . . . that's the coup d'œil.

[*The vision turns this way and that to show what curves of loveliness there may be. They watch, all but* CONSTANTINE, *who has sat silent and indifferent, rolling his second cigarette, which he now smokes serenely. At last* PHILIP'S *voice breaks in, at its coolest, its most ironic*]

PHILIP. And are we to assume, Mr. State, that this piece of self-decoration really expresses the nature of any woman? Rather an awful thought!

THOMAS [*in protest*]. Why?

PHILIP. Or if it expresses a man's opinion of her . . . that's rather worse.

THOMAS. It's damned smart. Ain't it, Mr. Huxtable?

MR. HUXTABLE [*who is examining closely*]. No use to us, of course. We couldn't imitate that under fifteen guineas. Look at the . . . what d'you call it?

WINDLESHAM [*loving the very word*]. Diamanté.

THOMAS [*with discretion*]. Just for England, of course, you might have the shiny stuff marking a bit more definitely where the pink silk ends and she begins.

MR. HUXTABLE [*not to be sordid*]. But it's a beautiful thing.

MR. STATE [*sweepingly*]. Fitted to adorn the presiding genius of some intellectual and artistic salon. More artistic than intellectual, perhaps . . . more likely to be the centre of Emotion than Thought!

WINDLESHAM. I could almost tell you who we shall sell that to. Mrs. . . . Mrs. . . . dear me . . . you'd all know the name. Assez, Ma'moiselle . . . sortez.

[*He turns off the light. The vision becomes once more a ridiculously expensive dress, with a rather thin and shivering young person half inside it, who is thus unceremoniously got rid of*]

WINDLESHAM. Numero sept.

[*Another costume*]

MR. STATE. Now here again. Green velvet. Is it velvet?

WINDLESHAM. Panne velvet. Promenez, s'il vous plaît.

MR. STATE. And ermine.

MR. HUXTABLE. Good Lord . . . more buttons!

MR. STATE. The very thing, no doubt, in which some peeress might take the chair at a drawing-room meeting.

PHILIP [*as he eyes the buttons and the ermine*]. Either of the Humanitarian or of the Anti-Sweating League. In-

deed, no peeress could dream of taking a chair without it.

MR. STATE [*in gentle reproof*]. Sarcasm, Mr. Philip.

PHILIP [*won by such sweetness*]. I really beg your pardon.

WINDLESHAM. Numero dix.

[*A third costume*]

PHILIP. What about this?

MR. STATE. Grey with a touch of pink . . . severely soft. An Anti-suffrage Platform.

PHILIP [*in tune with him*]. No . . . it's cut square in the neck. Suffrage, I should say.

MR. STATE [*rubbing his hands*]. Good! There is purpose in this persiflage, Major Thomas. Woman allures us along many paths. Be it ours to attend her, doing what service we may.

CONSTANTINE. You are a poet, Mr. State.

MR. STATE. I never wrote one in my life, sir.

CONSTANTINE. How many poets should cease scribbling and try to live such perfect epics as seems likely to be this purchase of yours of the Madras House!

MR. STATE [*much gratified*]. I shall be proud to be your successor. [*Then he soars*] But it is the Middle Class Woman of England that is waiting for me. The woman who still sits at the Parlour window of her Provincial Villa, pensively gazing through the Laurel bushes. I have seen her on my Solitary Walks. She must have h e r chance to Dazzle and Conquer. That is every woman's birthright . . . be she a Duchess in Mayfair or a doctor's wife in the suburbs of Leicester. And remember, gentlemen, that the Middle Class Women of England . . . think of them in bulk . . . they form one of the greatest Money Spending Machines the world has ever seen.

MR. HUXTABLE [*with a wag of the head; he is more at his ease now*]. Yes . . . their husbands' money.

MR. STATE [*taking a long breath and a high tone*]. All our most advanced thinkers are agreed that the economic independence of women is the next step in the march of civilisation.

MR. HUXTABLE [*overwhelmed*]. Oh . . . I beg pardon.

MR. STATE [*soaring now more than ever*]. And now that the Seed of Freedom is sown in their Sweet Natures . . . what Mighty Forest . . . what a Luxuriant, Tropical, Scented growth of Womanhood may not spring up around us. For we live in an Ugly World. Look at my tie! Consider your vest, Major Thomas! [*His eye searches for those costumes, and finds one*] This is all the Living Beauty that there is. We want more of it. I want to see that Poor Provincial Lady burst through the laurel bushes and dash down the road . . . Clad in Colours of the Rainbow.

[WINDLESHAM *has indeed detained the severely soft costume and its young lady, and there she has stood for a while, still smiling, but wondering, perhaps, behind the smile, into what peculiar company of milliners she has fallen.* THOMAS, *suddenly noticing that she is standing there, with the utmost politeness jumps up to hand his chair*]

THOMAS. I say, though . . . allow me.

WINDLESHAM. Thank you . . . but she can't. Not in that corset.

MR. STATE. Dear me, I had not meant to detain Mademoiselle. [*Then to amend his manners, and rather as if it were an incantation warranted to achieve his purpose*] Bon jour.

[*The young lady departs, a real smile quite shaming the unreal*]

MR. STATE. You clean forget they're there. We gave some time and money to elaborating a mechanical moving figure to take the place of . . . a real automaton, in fact. But sometimes it stuck and sometimes it ran away . . .

THOMAS. And the cost!

PHILIP [*finely*]. Flesh and blood is always cheaper.

MR. STATE. You approve of corsets, Mr. Windlesham?

WINDLESHAM. Oh, yes . . . the figure is the woman, as we say.

MR. STATE. Have you ever gone deeply into the Psychology of the question? A while ago I had a smart young Historian write Burrows a little Monograph on Corsets . . . price one shilling. Conservative, summing up in their favour. And we made up a little Museum of them . . . at Southampton, I think . . . but that was not a success. Major Thomas . . . we must

send Mr. Windlesham a copy of that Monograph. You will find it very interesting.

WINDLESHAM. I'm sure I shall. Can I do any more for you?

PHILIP. See me before I go, will you?

WINDLESHAM. Then it's au'voir.

[*And he flutters away. There is a pause as if they had to recollect where they were. It is broken by* PHILIP *saying, meditatively*]

PHILIP. I sometimes wonder if we realise what women's clothes are like . . . or our own, for that matter.

MR. HUXTABLE. What's that?

PHILIP. Have you ever tried to describe a costume as it would appear to a strange eye? Can you think of this last? A hat as little like a hat as anything on a creature's head may be. Lace. Flowers of a colour it never pleases God to grow them. And a jewelled feather . . . a feather with stones in it. The rest might be called a conspiracy in three colours on the part of a dozen sewing women to persuade you that the creature they have clothed can neither walk, digest her food, nor bear children. Now . . . can that be beautiful?

MR. STATE [*to whom this is the real conversational thing*]. Mr. Philip, that notion is a lever thrust beneath the very foundations of Society.

MR. HUXTABLE [*showing off a little*]. Oh . . . trying to upset people's ideas for the sake of doing it . . . silly.

THOMAS [*with solid sense*]. I think a crowd of well-dressed women is one of the most beautiful things in the world.

PHILIP. Have you ever seen an Eastern woman walk into a Bond Street tea shop?

THOMAS. No.

PHILIP [*forcefully*]. I have.

CONSTANTINE. Ah!

[*With one long, meditative exhalation he sends a little column of smoke into the air.* MR. STATE *turns to him deferentially*]

MR. STATE. We are boring you, Mr. Madras, I'm afraid. You were Facile Princeps upon all these questions so long ago.

[CONSTANTINE *speaks in the smoothest of voices*]

CONSTANTINE. No, I am not bored, Mr. State . . . only a little horrified.

MR. STATE. Why so?

CONSTANTINE. You see . . . I am a Mahommedan . . . and this attitude towards the other sex has become loathsome to me.

[*This bombshell, so delicately exploded, affects the company very variously. It will be some time before* MR. HUXTABLE *grasps its meaning at all.* THOMAS *simply opens his mouth.* MR. STATE *has evidently found a new joy in life.* PHILIP, *to whom it seems no news, merely says in light protest . . .*]

PHILIP. My dear Father!

MR. STATE [*as he beams round*]. A real Mahommedan?

CONSTANTINE. I have become a Mahommedan. If you were not, it would be inconvenient to live permanently at Hit . . . a village upon the borders of Southern Arabia . . . that is my home. Besides, I was converted.

THOMAS [*having recovered enough breath*]. I didn't know you could become a Mahommedan.

CONSTANTINE [*with some severity*]. You can become a Christian, sir.

THOMAS [*a little shocked*]. Ah . . . not quite the same sort of thing.

MR. STATE [*who feels that he really is re-discovering the old world*]. But how very interesting! To a broad-minded man . . . how extraordinarily interesting! Was it a sudden conversion?

CONSTANTINE. No . . . I had been searching for a religion . . . a common need in these times . . . and this is a very fine one, Mr. State.

MR. STATE. Is it? I must look it up. The Koran! Yes, I've never read the Koran . . . an oversight.

[*He makes a mental note. And slowly, slowly, the full iniquity of it has sunk into* MR. HUXTABLE. *His face has gone from red to white and back again to red. He becomes articulate and vehement. He thumps the table*]

MR. HUXTABLE. And what about Amelia?

MR. STATE [*with conciliatory calm*]. Who is Amelia?

PHILIP. Afterwards, Uncle.

MR. HUXTABLE [*thumping again*]. What about your wife? No, I won't be quiet, Phil! It's illegal.

CONSTANTINE [*with a half-cold, half-kindly eye on him*]. Harry . . . I dislike to see you make yourself ridiculous.

[*Only this was needed*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Who cares if I'm ridiculous? I've not spoken to you for thirty years . . . have I? That is . . . I've not taken more notice of you than I could help. And I come here to-day full of forgiveness . . . and curiosity . . . to see what you're really like now . . . and whether I've changed my mind . . . or whether I never really felt all that about you at all . . . and damned if you don't go and put up a fresh game on me! What about Amelia? Religion this time! Mahommedan, indeed . . . at your age! Can't you ever settle down? I beg your pardon, Mr. State. All right, Phil, afterwards! I've not done . . . but you're quite right . . . afterwards.

[*The gust over,* MR. STATE, *who is a little be-blown by it at such close quarters, says, partly with a peace-making intention, partly in curiosity* . . .]

MR. STATE. But do you indulge in a Harem?

[MR. HUXTABLE *is on his feet, righteously strepitant*]

MR. HUXTABLE. If you insult my sister by answering that question . . .

[*With a look and a gesture* CONSTANTINE *can silence him. Then with the coldest dignity he replies* . . .]

CONSTANTINE. My household, sir, is that of the ordinary Eastern gentleman of my position. We do not speak of our women in public.

MR. STATE. I'm sure I beg your pardon.

CONSTANTINE. Not at all. It is five years since I definitely retired from business and decided to consummate my affection for the East by settling down there. This final visit to Europe . . . partly to see you, Mr. State . . . was otherwise only to confirm my judgment on the question.

MR. STATE. Has it?

CONSTANTINE. It has. I was always out of place amongst you. I was sometimes tempted to regret my scandalous conduct . . . [*A slight stir from* MR. HUXTABLE] Hush, Harry . . . hush! But I never could persuade myself to amend it. It is some slight personal satisfaction to me to discover . . . with a stranger's eye . . . that Europe in its attitude towards women is mad.

MR. STATE. Mad!

CONSTANTINE. Mad.

THOMAS [*who is all ears*]. I say!

CONSTANTINE. You possibly agree with me, Major Thomas.

THOMAS [*much taken aback*]. No . . . I don't think so.

CONSTANTINE. Many men do, but — poor fellows — they dare not say so. For instance, Mr. State, what can be said of a community in which five men of some ability and dignity are met together to traffic in . . . what was the Numéro of that aphrodisiac that so particularly attracted Major Thomas?

[THOMAS *is shocked even to violence*]

THOMAS. No . . . really. I protest —

MR. STATE [*utterly calm*]. Easy, Major Thomas. Let us consider the accusation philosophically. [*Then with the sweetest smile*] Surely that is a gross construction to put on the instinct of every beautiful woman to adorn herself.

CONSTANTINE. Why gross? I delight in pretty women, prettily adorned. To come home after a day's work to the welcome of one's women folk . . . to find them unharassed by notions of business or politics . . . ready to refresh one's spirit by attuning it to the gentler, sweeter side of life . . .

THOMAS [*making hearty atonement*]. Oh! Quite so . . . quite so.

CONSTANTINE. I thought you would agree with me, Major Thomas. That is the Mahommedan gentleman's domestic ideal.

THOMAS [*brought up short*]. Is it?

CONSTANTINE. But you don't expect to find your wife dressed like that . . . the diamanté and the . . .

THOMAS [*mental discomfort growing on him*]. No . . . that was a going out dress.

PHILIP [*greatly enjoying this contest*]. Oh . . . Tommy! Tommy!

THOMAS [*in tortuosity of mind — and conscience*]. But I tell you if my wife would . . . that is, if any chap's wife will . . . I mean . . . [*Then he gets it out*] If a woman always kept herself smart and attractive at home then a man would have no excuse for gadding about after other women.

[MR. HUXTABLE *joins the fray, suddenly, snappily*]

MR. HUXTABLE. She sits looking after his children . . . what more does he want of her?

CONSTANTINE. Harry is a born husband, Major Thomas.

MR. HUXTABLE. I'm not a born libertine, I hope.

THOMAS. Libertine be damned.

MR. STATE [*pacifically*]. Gentlemen, gentlemen . . . these are abstract propositions.

MR. HUXTABLE. Gadding after another man's wife, perhaps! Though I don't think you ever did that, Constantine . . . I'll do you justice . . . I don't think you ever did.

CONSTANTINE. I never did.

PHILIP [*with intense mischief*]. Oh, Tommy, Tommy . . . can you say the same?

[THOMAS *is really flabbergasted at the indecency*]

THOMAS. Phil, that ain't nice . . . that ain't gentlemanly. And I wasn't thinking of that, and you know I wasn't. And . . . we ain't all so unattractive to women as you are.

[MR. STATE *loses himself in enjoyment of this repartee*]

MR. STATE. Ah . . . Sour Grapes, Mr. Philip. We mustn't be personal . . . but is it Sour Grapes?

PHILIP [*very coolly on his defence*]. Thank you, Tommy . . . I can attract just the sort of woman I want to attract. But as long as it's Numero Cinq, Six or Sept that attracts you . . . well . . . so long will Madras Houses be an excellent investment for Mr. State.

[*That is the end of that little breeze, and* CONSTANTINE'S *voice completes the quieting*]

CONSTANTINE. Phil is a cold-blooded egotist, and if women like him that is their misfortune. I know his way with a woman . . . coax her on to the intellectual plane, where he thinks he can better her. You have my sympathy, Major Thomas. I also am as susceptible as Nature means a man to be . . . as all women must wish him to be. And I referred to these going out dresses because — candidly — I found myself obliged to leave a country where women are let loose with money to spend and time to waste. Encouraged to flaunt their charms on the very streets . . . proud if they see the busmen wink . . .

MR. HUXTABLE. Not busmen.

[*He is only gently deprecating now*]

CONSTANTINE. Proud, my dear Harry, if they see a cabman smile.

[MR. HUXTABLE *looks around, and then nods solemnly and thoughtfully*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Yes, it's true. I'd deny it any other time, but I've been thinking a bit lately . . . and the things you think of once you start to think! And it's true. [*But with great chivalry*] Only they don't know they do it. They don't know they do it. [*Then a doubt occurring*] D'you think they know they do it, Phil?

PHILIP. Some of them suspect, Uncle.

MR. HUXTABLE [*his faith unspoiled*]. No, what I say is it's Instinct . . . and we've just got to be as nice-minded about it as we can. There was Julia, this summer at Weymouth . . . that's one of my daughters. Bought herself a dress . . . not one of the Numero sort, of course . . . but very pretty . . . orange colour, it was . . . stripes. But you could see it a mile off on the parade . . . and her sisters all with their noses out of joint. I said to myself . . . Instinct . . .

[*Suddenly* MR. STATE *rescues the discussion*]

MR. STATE. Yes, sir . . . the noblest Instinct of all . . . the Instinct to Perpetuate our Race. Let us take High Ground in this matter, gentlemen.

CONSTANTINE [*unstirred*]. The very highest, Mr. State. If you think that to turn Weymouth for a month a year into a cockpit of haphazard love-making, with all the consequences that custom entails, is the best way of perpetuating your race . . . well, I disagree with you . . . but it's a point of view. What I ask is why Major Thomas and myself . . . already perhaps in a creditable state of marital perpetuation . . . should have our busy London lives obsessed by . . . What is this thing?

PHILIP. La belle Hélène's new hat, Father.

CONSTANTINE. Now, that may be ugly . . . I hope I never made anything quite so ugly myself . . . but it's attractive.

PHILIP [*with a wry face*]. No, Father.

CONSTANTINE. Isn't it, Major Thomas?

THOMAS [*honestly*]. Well . . . it makes you look at em when you might not otherwise.

CONSTANTINE. Yes . . . it's provocative. Its intention is that none of the world's work shall be done while it's about. And when it's always about I honestly confess again that I cannot

do my share. It's a terrible thing to be constantly conscious of women. They have their uses to the world . . . as you so happily phrased it, Mr. State . . . their perpetual use . . . and the world's interest is best served by keeping them strictly to it. Are these provocative ladies [*he fingers the hat again*] remarkable for perpetuation now-a-days?

[*Once more* Mr. State *bursts in — this time almost heart-brokenly*]

Mr. State. I can't bear this, sir . . . I can't bear to take such a view of life . . . no man of feeling could. Besides, it's Reactionary . . . you're on the wrong tack. You must come back to us, sir. You gave us Joy and Pleasure . . . can we do without them? When you find yourself once more among the Loveliness you helped us to Worship, you'll change your mind. What was the end of that little story of the Duchess? How, on the appointed night, attired in her Madras Creation, she swept into the Ball room with a frou-frou of silk skirt wafting Perfume as she came . . . while her younger rivals Pale before the Intoxication of her Beauty, and every man in the room . . . young and old . . . struggles for a Glimpse . . . a Word . . . a Look. [*Once again he starts to soar*] A Ball room, sir . . . isn't it one of the Sweetest Sights in the World? When bright the lamps shine o'er Fair Women and Brave Men. Music arises with its Voluptuous Swell. Soft eyes look Love to eyes which speak again. And all goes Merry as a Marriage Bell! Byron, gentlemen, taught me at my mother's knee. The poet of Love and Liberty . . . read in every school in America.

[*At the end of this recitation, which* Mr. Huxtable *barely refrains from applauding,* Constantine *goes coolly on*]

Constantine. Mr. State, that is my case. The whole of our upper class life, which everyone with a say in the government of the country tries to lead . . . is now run as a ball room is run. Men swaggering before women . . . the women ogling the men. Once a lad got some training in manliness. But now from the very start . . . ! In your own progressive country . . . mixed education . . . oh, my dear sir . . . mixed education!

Mr. State. A softening influence.

Constantine [*unexpectedly*]. Of course it is. And what has it sunk to, moreover . . . all education now-a-days? Book-learning. Because woman's a dab at that . . . though it's of quite secondary importance to a man.

Thomas [*feelingly*]. That's so.

Constantine. And moral influence. Woman's morality . . . the worst in the world.

Philip. Slave morality.

Constantine. Yes. Read Nietzsche . . . as my friend Tarleton says. [*All one gathers from this cryptic allusion is that* Mr. Huxtable, *at any rate, reprobates Tarleton, and, inferentially, Nietzsche*] At Oxford and Cambridge it grows worse . . . married professors . . . Newnham and Girton . . . suffrage questions . . . purity questions.

Mr. Huxtable. Of course, some of the novels . . .

Constantine. From seventeen to thirty-four . . . the years which a man should consecrate to the acquiring of political virtue . . . wherever he turns he is distracted, provoked, tantalised by the barefaced presence of women. How's he to keep a clear brain for the larger issues of life? Why do you soldiers, Major Thomas, volunteer with such alacrity for foreign service?

Thomas [*with a jump*]. Good God . . . I never thought of that.

Constantine. What's the result? Every great public question . . . all politics, all religion, all economy is being brought down to the level of women's emotion. Admirable in its way, . . . charming in its place! But softening, sentimentalising, enervating . . . lapping the world, if you let it, in the nursery cotton wool of prettiness and pettiness. Men don't realise how far rotted by the process they are . . . that's what's so fatal. We're used to a whole nation's anger being vented in scoldings . . . or rather we're getting used to the thought that it's naughty to be angry at all. Justice degenerates into kindness . . . that doesn't surprise us. Religion is a pretty hymn tune to keep us from fear of the dark. You four unfortunates might own the truth just for once . . . you needn't tell your wives.

Mr. State. I am not married.

Constantine. I might have known it.

MR. STATE [*a little astonished*]. But no matter.

CONSTANTINE [*with full appreciation of what he says*]. Women haven't morals or intellect in our sense of the words. They have other incompatible qualities quite as important, no doubt. But shut them away from public life and public exhibition. It's degrading to compete with them . . . it's as degrading to compete for them. Perhaps we're too late already . . . but oh, my dear sentimental Sir [*he addresses the pained though admiring* MR. STATE], if we could replant the laurel bushes thick enough we might yet rediscover the fine manly world we are losing.

[*Except* PHILIP, *who sits detached and attentive, they are all rather depressed by this judgment upon them.* THOMAS *recovers sufficiently to ask . . .*]

THOMAS. Are you advocating polygamy in England?

CONSTANTINE. That is what it should come to.

THOMAS. Well . . . I call that rather shocking. [*Then with some hopeful interest*] And is it practical?

CONSTANTINE. I did not anticipate the reform in my lifetime . . . so I left for the East.

PHILIP [*finely*]. You did quite right, Father. I wish everyone of your way of thinking would do the same.

[CONSTANTINE *is ready for him*]

CONSTANTINE. Are you prepared for so much depopulation? Think of the women who'd be off to-morrow.

[MR. HUXTABLE *wakes from stupefaction to say with tremendous emphasis*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Never!

CONSTANTINE. Wrong, Harry.

MR. HUXTABLE. No, I'm not wrong just because you say so! You ought to listen to me a bit sometimes. I always listened to you.

CONSTANTINE. Bless your quick temper.

[*Who could resist* CONSTANTINE'S *smile . . . Well, not* HUXTABLE]

MR. HUXTABLE. Oh . . . go on . . . tell me why I'm wrong . . . I daresay I am.

CONSTANTINE. Even if you have liked bringing up six daughters and not getting them married . . . how have they liked it? You should have drowned them at birth, Harry . . .

MR. HUXTABLE. You must have your joke, mustn't you?

CONSTANTINE. Therefore, how much pleasanter for you . . . how much better for them . . . if you'd only to find one man ready, for a small consideration, to marry the lot.

MR. HUXTABLE [*with intense delight*]. Now if I was to tell my wife that she wouldn't see the umour of it.

CONSTANTINE. The woman emancipator's last ditch, Mr. State, is the trust that women will side with him. Don't make any mistake. This is a serious question to them . . . of health and happiness . . . and sometimes of bread and butter. Quite apart from our customers here . . . kept women, every one of them . . .

MR. STATE [*in some alarm*]. You don't say!

CONSTANTINE [*gently lifting him from the little trap*]. Economically. Kept by their husbands . . . or if they live on their dividends, kept by Society.

PHILIP. What about men who live on their dividends?

MR. STATE. No . . . now don't let us go on to politics.

CONSTANTINE. . . . And apart from the prisoners in that chaste little fortress on Denmark Hill . . . we used to employ, Harry, between us . . . what? . . . two or three hundred free and independent women . . . making clothes for the others, the ladies. They are as free as you like . . . free to go . . . free to starve. How much do they rejoice in their freedom to earn their living by ruining their health and stifling their instincts? Answer me, Harry, you monster of good-natured wickedness.

MR. HUXTABLE. What's that?

CONSTANTINE. You keep an industrial seraglio.

MR. HUXTABLE. A what?

CONSTANTINE. What else is your Roberts and Huxtable but a harem of industry? Do you know that it would sicken with horror a good Mahommedan? You buy these girls in the open market . . . you keep them under lock and key . . .

MR. HUXTABLE. I do?

CONSTANTINE. Quite right, Harry, no harm done. [*Then his voice sinks to the utmost seriousness*] But you coin your profits out of them by putting on exhibition for ten hours a day . . . their good looks, their good manners,

their womanhood. Hired out it is to any stranger to hold as cheap for a few minutes as common decency allows. And when you've worn them out you turn them out . . . forget their very names . . . wouldn't know their faces if you met them selling matches at your door. For such treatment of potential motherhood, my Prophet condemns a man to Hell.

MR. HUXTABLE [*breathless with amazement*]. Well, I never did in all my born days! They can marry respectably, can't they? We like em to marry.

PHILIP. Yes, Uncle . . . I went into that question with Miss Yates and the Brigstocks this morning.

CONSTANTINE [*completing his case*]. I ask you all . . . what is to happen to you as a nation? Where are your future generations coming from? What with the well-kept women you flatter and æstheticise till they won't give you children, and the free women you work at market rates till they can't give you children . . .

MR. HUXTABLE [*half-humorously sulky*]. Miss Yates has obliged us, anyhow.

PHILIP [*quickly capping him*]. And we're going to dismiss her.

[MR. HUXTABLE *flashes again into protestation*]

MR. HUXTABLE. What else can we do? But I said you weren't to be hard on the girl. And I won't be upset like this. I want to take things as I find em . . . that is as I used to find em . . . before there was any of these ideas going around . . . and I'm sure we were happier without em. Stifling their instincts . . . it's a horrid way to talk. And I don't believe it. I could send for every girl in the shop, and not one of em would hint at it to me. [*He has triumphed with himself so far, but his new-born intellectual conscience brings him down*] Not that that proves anything, does it? I'm a fool. It's a beastly world. But I don't make it so, do I?

PHILIP. Who does?

MR. HUXTABLE. Other people. [PHILIP'S *eye is on him*] Oh, I see it coming. You're going to say we're all the other people or something. I'm getting up to you.

CONSTANTINE [*very carefully*]. What is this about a Miss Yates?

PHILIP. A little bother down at Peckham. I can tell you afterwards if you like.

CONSTANTINE. No . . . there is no need.

[*Something in the tone of this last makes* PHILIP *look up quickly. But* MR. STATE, *with a sudden thought, has first dived for his watch, and then, at the sight of it, gets up from the table*]

MR. STATE. Gentlemen, are you aware of the time? I may mention that I have a City appointment at four o'clock.

CONSTANTINE [*polite, but leisurely*]. Are we detaining you, Mr. State? Not universal or compulsory polygamy, Major Thomas. That would be nonsense. The very distribution of the sexes forbids it. But its recognition is one of the logical outcomes of the aristocratic method of government. And that's the only ultimate method . . . all others are interim plans for sifting out various aristocracies. The community of the future will specialise its functions. Women will find, I hope, some intellectual companions like my son, who will, besides, take a gentle interest in the County Council. There will be single-hearted men like Harry, content with old-fashioned domesticity. There will be poets like you, Mr. State, to dream about women and to dress them . . . their bodies in silks and their virtues in phrases. But there must also be such men as Major Thomas and myself . . .

[THOMAS *rises, yet again, to this piece of chaff*]

THOMAS. No, no! I'm not like that . . . not in the least. Because a fellow has been in the Army! Don't drag me in.

MR. STATE. As stimulating a conversation as I remember. A little hard to follow at times . . . but worth far more than the sacrifice of any mere business doings.

[CONSTANTINE *takes the hint graciously, and is apt for business at once*]

CONSTANTINE. My fault! Shall we agree, Mr. State, to accept as much of your offer as you have no intention of altering? We are dealing for both the shops?

MR. STATE. Yes. What are we proposing to knock off their valuation, Major Thomas?

THOMAS. Eight thousand six hundred.

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CONSTANTINE. Phil, what were we prepared to come down?

PHILIP. Nine thousand.

CONSTANTINE. A very creditable margin. Your offer is accepted, Mr. State.

[MR. STATE *feels he must really play up to such magnificent conducting of business*]

MR. STATE. I should prefer to knock you down only eight thousand.

CONSTANTINE [*keeping the advantage*]. Isn't that merely romantic of you, Mr. State . . . not in the best form of business art?

THOMAS. But the conditions, you know?

CONSTANTINE. We accept your conditions. If they won't work you'll be only anxious to alter them. So the business is done.

[MR. HUXTABLE'S *eyes are wide*]

MR. HUXTABLE. But look here.

PHILIP. Uncle Harry has something to say . . .

MR. HUXTABLE [*assertively*]. Yes.

CONSTANTINE. Something different to say, Harry?

MR. HUXTABLE [*after thinking it over*]. No.

[*So* CONSTANTINE *returns happily to his subject*]

CONSTANTINE. What interests me about this Woman Question . . . now that I've settled my personal share in it . . . is to wonder how Europe, hampered by such an unsolved problem, can hope to stand up against the Oriental revival.

THOMAS. What's that?

CONSTANTINE. You'll hear of it shortly. Up from the Persian gulf to where I live we could grow enough wheat to feed the British Empire. Life there is simple and spacious . . . the air is not breathed out. All we want is a happy, hardy race of men, and under a decent government we shall soon beget it. But you Europeans! Is this the symbol you are marching to the future under? [*He has found again, and lifts up, la Belle Hélène's new hat*] A cap of slavery! You are all idolaters of women . . . and they are the slaves of your idolatry.

MR. STATE [*with undisguised admiration*]. Mr. Madras, I am proud to have met you again. If I say another word, I may be so interested in your reply that I shall miss my appointment. My coat? Thank you, Mr. Philip. I have to meet a man about a new system of country house drainage that he wants me to finance. I can hardly hope for another Transcendental Discussion upon that.

CONSTANTINE. Why not?

MR. STATE. If you were he! Good-bye, sir. Good-day, Mr. Huxtable. Till to-morrow, Major Thomas. No, Mr. Philip, don't see me down.

[*He is off for his next deal.* PHILIP *civilly takes him past the door, saying* . . .]

PHILIP. Your car's at the Bond Street entrance, I expect.

[*And then he comes back.* CONSTANTINE *is keeping half a friendly eye on* HUXTABLE, *who fidgets under it.* THOMAS *takes breath and expounds a grievance*]

THOMAS. That's how he settles business. But leaves us all the papers to do. I shall take mine home. The four-thirty gets me indoors by a quarter to six. Time for a cup of tea! Phil, have you got China tea?

PHILIP. Downstairs.

MR. HUXTABLE. I must be getting back, I think.

CONSTANTINE. Harry . . . you're running away from me.

MR. HUXTABLE [*in frank amused confession*]. Yes . . . I was. Habit, y'know . . . habit.

CONSTANTINE [*with the most friendly condescension*]. Suppose I go with you . . . part of the way. How do you go?

MR. HUXTABLE. On a bus.

CONSTANTINE. Suppose we go together . . . on a bus.

MR. HUXTABLE [*desperately cunning*]. It's all right . . . they won't see me with you. We don't close till seven.

[CONSTANTINE'S *face sours*]

CONSTANTINE. No, to be sure. Phil, I can't come to dinner, I'm afraid.

PHILIP. Oh, I was going to tell you. Mother will be there. Tommy, you know the tea room.

THOMAS [*all tact*]. Oh, quite!

PHILIP. Straight downstairs, first to the left and the second passage. I'll follow.

[THOMAS *departs.* CONSTANTINE *says, indifferently* . . .]

CONSTANTINE. Then I'll come in after dinner.

PHILIP. You don't mind?

CONSTANTINE. No.

[*There stands* MR. HUXTABLE, *first on one foot and then on*

the other, desperately nervous. CONSTANTINE *smiling at him.* PHILIP *cannot resist it. He says . . .*]

PHILIP. It's afterwards now, Uncle. Fire away.

[*And is off.* CONSTANTINE *still smiles. Poor* MR. HUXTABLE *makes a desperate effort to do the proper thing by this reprobate. He forms his face into a frown. It's no use; an answering smile will come. He surrenders*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Look here . . . don't let's talk about Amelia.

CONSTANTINE. No . . . never rake up the past.

MR. HUXTABLE. Lord! What else has a chap got to think of?

CONSTANTINE. That's why you look so old.

MR. HUXTABLE. Do I, now?

CONSTANTINE. What age are you?

MR. HUXTABLE. Sixty.

[*The two sit down together*]

CONSTANTINE. You should come and stay with me at Hit . . . not far from Hillel . . . Hillel is Babylon, Harry.

MR. HUXTABLE [*curious*]. What's it like there?

CONSTANTINE. The house is white, and there are palm trees about it . . . and not far off flows the Euphrates.

MR. HUXTABLE. Just like in the Bible. [*His face is wistful*] Constantine.

CONSTANTINE. Yes, Harry.

MR. HUXTABLE. You've said odder things this afternoon than I've ever heard you say before.

CONSTANTINE. Probably not.

MR. HUXTABLE [*wondering*]. And I haven't really minded em. But I believe it's the first time I've ever understood you . . . and p'raps that's just as well for me.

CONSTANTINE [*encouragingly*]. Oh . . . why, Harry?

MR. HUXTABLE. Because . . . d'you think it's only not being very clever keeps us . . . well behaved?

CONSTANTINE. Has it kept you happy?

MR. HUXTABLE [*impatient at the petty word*]. Anyone can be happy. What worries me is having got to my age and only just beginning to understand anything at all. And you can't learn it out of books, old man. Books don't tell you the truth . . . at least not any that I can find. I wonder if I'd been a bit of a dog like you . . . ? But there it is . . . you can't do things on purpose. And what's more, don't you go to think I'd have done them if I could . . . knowing them to be wrong. [*Then comes a discovery*] But I was always jealous of you, Constantine, for you seemed to get the best of everything . . . and I know people couldn't help being fond of you . . . for I was fond of you myself, whatever you did. That was odd to start with. And now here we are, both of us old chaps . . .

CONSTANTINE [*as he throws back his head*]. I am not old.

MR. HUXTABLE [*with sudden misgiving*]. You don't repent, do you?

CONSTANTINE. What of?

MR. HUXTABLE. Katherine said this morning that you might have . . . but I wasn't afraid of that. [*Now he wags his head wisely*] You know . . . you evil-doers . . . you upset us all, and you hurt our feelings, and of course you ought to be ashamed of yourself. But . . . well . . . it's like the only time I went abroad. I was sick going . . . I was orribly uncomfortable . . . I ated the cooking . . . I was sick coming back. But I wouldn't have missed it. . . !

CONSTANTINE [*in affectionate good fellowship*]. Come to Arabia, Harry.

MR. HUXTABLE [*humorously pathetic about it*]. Don't you make game of me. My time's over. What have I done with it, now? Married. Brought up a family. Been master to a few hundred girls and fellows who never really cared a bit for me. I've been made a convenience of . . . that's my life. That's where I envy you. You've had your own way . . . and you don't look now as if you'd be damned for it, either.

CONSTANTINE [*in gentlemanly defiance*]. I sha'n't be.

[MR. HUXTABLE *shakes a fist, somewhat, though unconsciously, in the direction of the ceiling*]

MR. HUXTABLE. It's not fair, and I don't care who hears me say so.

CONSTANTINE. Suppose we shout it from the top of the bus.

[*As they start,* MR. HUXTABLE *returns to his mundane, responsible self*]

MR. HUXTABLE. But you know, old man . . . you'll excuse me, I'm sure

. . . and it's all very well having theories and being able to talk . . . still, you did treat Amelia very badly . . . and those other ones, too . . . say what you like! Let go my arm, will you!

CONSTANTINE. Why?

MR. HUXTABLE [*his scruples less strong than the soft touch of* CONSTANTINE'S *hand*]. Well, p'raps you needn't. [*A thought strikes him*] Are you really going away for good this time?

CONSTANTINE. To-morrow.

MR. HUXTABLE [*beaming on him*]. Then come home and see mother and the girls.

[MAJOR THOMAS *comes back, looking about him*]

THOMAS. Excuse me . . . I left my hat.

CONSTANTINE. It will make them very uncomfortable.

MR. HUXTABLE [*his smile fading*]. D'you think so? Won't it do em good . . . broaden their minds?

[PHILIP *comes back, too*]

MR. HUXTABLE. Phil . . . shall I take your father ome to call?

PHILIP [*after one gasp at the prospect, says with great cheerfulness* . . .] Certainly.

CONSTANTINE. I'll be with you by nine, Phil.

[MR. HUXTABLE'S *dare-devil heart fails once more*]

MR. HUXTABLE. I say . . . better not be too friendly through the shop.

[CONSTANTINE *smiles still, but does not loose his arm. Off they go*]

THOMAS [*still searching*]. Where the devil did I put it?

PHILIP. Pity you can't take father's place at dinner, Tommy.

[THOMAS *stops and looks at him aggrievedly*]

THOMAS. Are you chaffing me?

PHILIP. We might get some further light on the Woman Question. My mother's opinion and Jessica's upon such men as you and my father.

[*He picks up some papers and sits to them at the table*]

THOMAS. Look here, Phil . . . don't you aggravate me into behaving rashly. Here it is.

[*He has found his hat on a gas-bracket — and he slams it on*]

PHILIP. With Jessica?

THOMAS [*with ferocious gallantry*]. Yes . . . a damned attractive woman.

PHILIP. After all . . . as an abstract proposition, Tommy . . . polyandry is just as simple a way . . . and as far as we know, as much Nature's way as the other. We ought to have put that point to the gentle Mahommedan.

THOMAS [*after vainly considering this for a moment*]. Phil, I should like to see you in love with a woman . . . It'd serve you right.

[*Suddenly* PHILIP *drops his mocking tone and his face grows gentle and grave*]

PHILIP. Tommy . . . what's the purpose of it all? Apart from the sentimental wallowings of Mr. Eustace Perrin State . . . and putting that Lord of Creation, my father, on one side for a moment . . . what do we slow-breeding, civilised people get out of love . . . and the beauty of women . . . and the artistic setting that beauty demands? For which we do pay rather a big price, you know, Tommy. What do we get for it?

THOMAS [*utterly at sea*]. I don't know.

PHILIP. It's an important question. Think it over in the train.

THOMAS. Old chap . . . I beg your pardon . . . the County Council is the best place for you. It'll stop your addling over these silly conundrums.

PHILIP [*subtly*]. On the contrary.

THOMAS [*his favourite phrase again*]. What do you mean?

PHILIP. Get out . . . you'll miss that four-thirty.

[THOMAS *gets out.* PHILIP *gets desperately to loathed business*]

ACT IV

PHILIP, *his mother, and* JESSICA, *are sitting, after dinner, round the drawing-room fire in Phillimore Gardens.* JESSICA, *rather, is away upon the bench of her long, black piano, sorting bound books of music, and the firelight hardly reaches her. But it flickers over* MRS. MADRAS, *and though it marks more deeply the little bitter lines on her face, it leaves a glow there in recompense. She sits, poor, anxious old lady, gazing, not into the fire, but at the shining copper-fender, her hands on her lap, as usual. Every now and*

then she lifts her head to listen. PHILIP *is comfortable upon the sofa opposite; he is smoking, and is deep, besides, in some weighty volume, the Longman Edition of the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission, perhaps.*

It is a charming room. The walls are grey, the paint is a darker grey. The curtains to the two long windows are of the gentlest pink brocade; the lights that hang on plain little brackets from the walls are a soft pink, too, and there is no other colour in the room, but the maziness of some Persian rugs on the floor and the mellowed brilliancy of the Arundel prints on the walls. There is no more furniture than there need be; there is not more light than there need be; yet it is not empty or dreary. There is just nothing to jar, nothing to prevent a sensitive soul finding rest there.

[*The parlour maid comes in; she is dressed in grey, too, capless, some black ribbons about her.* (*Really,* JESSICA'S *home inclines to be a little precious!*) *She brings letters, one for* JESSICA, *two for* PHILIP, *and departs*]

PHILIP. Last post.

JESSICA. Half-past nine. I suppose your father means to come?

PHILIP. He said so.

MRS. MADRAS. Is your letter interesting, Jessica?

JESSICA. A receipt.

MRS. MADRAS. Do you run bills?

JESSICA. Lots.

MRS. MADRAS. Is that quite wise?

JESSICA. The tradesmen prefer it.

[*With that she walks to her writing table.* JESSICA'S *manner to her mother-in-law is over-courteous, an unkind weapon against which the old lady, but half conscious of it, is quite defenceless.* PHILIP *has opened his second letter, and whistles, at its contents, a bar of a tune that is in his head*]

JESSICA. What's the matter, Phil?

[*To emphasise his feelings he performs the second bar with variations*]

JESSICA. As bad as that?

[*For final comment he brings the matter to a full close on one expressive note, and puts the letter away.* JESSICA *flicks at him amusedly*]

MRS. MADRAS. How absurd! You can't tell in the least what he means.

JESSICA. No.

[*With forced patience she wanders back to her piano*]

MRS. MADRAS. You might play us something, Jessica . . . just to pass the time.

[*Unobserved,* JESSICA *casts her eyes up to the ceiling*]

JESSICA. What will you have?

MRS. MADRAS. I am sure you play all the latest things.

JESSICA. I'm afraid you don't really like my playing.

MRS. MADRAS. I do think it's a little professional. I prefer something softer.

[JESSICA *leaves the piano*]

JESSICA. I'm afraid we are giving you a dull evening.

MRS. MADRAS [*with that suddenness which seems to characterise the* HUXTABLE *family*]. Why do you never call me mother, Jessica?

JESSICA. Don't I?

MRS. MADRAS [*resenting prevarication*]. You know you don't.

JESSICA. I suppose I don't think of you just like that.

MRS. MADRAS. What has that to do with it?

JESSICA [*more coldly courteous than ever*]. Nothing . . . Mother.

MRS. MADRAS. That's not a very nice manner of giving way, either, is it?

JESSICA [*on the edge of an outburst*]. It seemed to me sufficiently childish.

MRS. MADRAS [*parading a double injury*]. I don't know what you mean. It's easy to be too clever for me, Jessica.

[PHILIP *mercifully intervenes*]

PHILIP. Mother, what do you think parents gain by insisting on respect and affection from grown-up children?

MRS. MADRAS. Isn't it their right?

PHILIP. But I asked what they gained.

MRS. MADRAS. Isn't it natural? When an old woman has lost her husband, or worse, if she's to lose her children, too, what has she left?

JESSICA [*recovering a little kindness*]. Her womanhood, Mother.

PHILIP. Her old-womanhood. You know, it may be a very beautiful possession.

[*The parlour maid announces* "Mr. Constantine Madras." *There stands* Constantine *in the bright light of the hall, more dramatically dignified than ever. As he comes in, though, it seems as if there was the slightest strain in his charming manners. He has not changed his clothes for the evening. He goes straight to* Jessica, *and it seems that he has a curious soft way of shaking hands with women*]

Constantine. How do you do, Jessica? I find you looking beautiful.

[Jessica *acknowledges the compliment with a little disdainful bend of the head and leaves him, then with a glance at* Philip *leaves the room.* Constantine *comes towards his wife. She does not look up, but her face wrinkles pathetically. So he speaks at last*]

Constantine. Well, Amelia?

[*For* Mrs. Madras *it must be resentment or tears, or both. Resentment comes first*]

Mrs. Madras. Is that the way to speak to me after thirty years?

Constantine [*amicably*]. Perhaps it isn't. But there's not much variety of choice in greetings, is there?

[Philip, *nodding to his father, has edged to the door, and now edges out of it*]

Constantine. They leave us alone. We might be an engaged couple.

[*She stays silent, distressfully avoiding his eye. He takes a chair and sits by her. He would say (as* Jessica *no doubt would say of herself) that he speaks kindly to her*]

Constantine. Well, Amelia? I beg your pardon. I repeat myself, and you dislike the phrase. I hope, though, that you are quite well? Don't cry, dear Amelia . . . unless, of course, vou want to cry. Well, then . . . cry. And, when you've finished crying . . . there's no hurry . . . you shall tell me why you wished to see me . . . and run the risk of upsetting yourself like this.

Mrs. Madras [*dabbing her eyes*]. I don't often cry. I don't often get a chance.

Constantine. I fear that is only one way of saying that you miss me.

[*The handkerchief is put away, and she faces him*]

Mrs. Madras. Are you really going back to that country to-morrow?

Constantine. To-morrow morning.

Mrs. Madras. For good?

Constantine [*with thanksgiving*]. For ever.

Mrs. Madras [*desperately resolute*]. Will you take me with you?

[*It takes* Constantine *just a moment to recover*]

Constantine. No, Amelia, I will not.

Mrs. Madras [*re-acting a little hysterically*]. I'm sure I don't want to go, and I'm sure I never meant to ask you. But you haven't changed a bit, Constantine . . . in spite of your beard. [*Then the voice saddens and almost dies away*] I have.

Constantine. Only externally, I'm sure.

Mrs. Madras. Why did you ever marry me? You married me for my money.

Constantine [*sighting boredom*]. It is so long ago.

Mrs. Madras. It isn't . . . it seems like yesterday. Didn't you marry me for my money?

Constantine. Partly, Amelia, partly. Why did you marry me?

Mrs. Madras. I wanted to. I was a fool.

Constantine [*evenly still*]. You were a fool, perhaps, to grumble at the consequence of getting what you wanted. It would have been kinder of me, no doubt, not to marry you. But I was more impetuous then, and, of course, less experienced. I didn't realise you never could change your idea of what a good husband must be, nor how necessary it would become that you should.

Mrs. Madras. How dare you make excuses for the way you treated me?

Constantine. There were two excuses. I was the first. I'm afraid that you ultimately became the second.

Mrs. Madras [*with spirit*]. I only stood up for my rights.

Constantine. You got them, too. We separated, and there was an end of it.

Mrs. Madras. I've never been happy since.

Constantine. That is nothing to be proud of, my dear.

[Mrs. Madras *feels the strangeness between them wearing off*]

Mrs. Madras. What happened to

that woman and her son . . . that Flora?

CONSTANTINE. The son is an engineer . . . promises very well, his employers tell me. Flora lives at Hitchin . . . quite comfortably, I have reason to believe.

MRS. MADRAS. She was older than me.

CONSTANTINE. About the same age, I think.

MRS. MADRAS. You've given her money?

CONSTANTINE [*his eyebrows up*]. Certainly . . . they were both provided for.

MRS. MADRAS. Don't you expect me to be jealous?

CONSTANTINE [*with a sigh*]. Still, Amelia?

MRS. MADRAS. Do you ever see her now?

CONSTANTINE. I haven't seen her for years.

MRS. MADRAS. It seems to me she has been just as well treated as I have . . . if not better.

CONSTANTINE. She expected less.

MRS. MADRAS. And what about the others?

CONSTANTINE [*his patience giving out*]. No, really, it's thirty years ago . . . I cannot fight my battles over again. Please tell me what I can do for you beyond taking you back with me.

MRS. MADRAS [*cowering to the least harshness*]. I didn't mean that. I don't know what made me say it. But it's dreadful seeing you once more and being alone with you.

CONSTANTINE. Now, Amelia, are you going to cry again?

MRS. MADRAS [*setting her teeth*]. No.

CONSTANTINE. That's right.

[MRS. MADRAS *really does pull herself together, and becomes intensely reasonable*]

MRS. MADRAS. What I really want you to do, if you please, Constantine, is not to go away. I don't expect us to live together . . . after the way you have behaved I could not consent to such a thing. But somebody must look after you when you are ill, and, what's more, I don't think you ought to go and die out of your own country.

CONSTANTINE [*meeting reason with reason*]. My dear . . . I have formed other ties.

MRS. MADRAS. Will you please explain exactly what you mean by that?

CONSTANTINE. I am a Mahommedan.

MRS. MADRAS. Nonsense!

CONSTANTINE. Possibly you are not acquainted with the Mahommedan marriage laws.

MRS. MADRAS. D'you mean to say you're not married to me?

CONSTANTINE. No . . . though it was not considered necessary for me to take that into account in conforming to it . . . I did.

MRS. MADRAS. Well . . . I never thought you could behave any worse. Why weren't you satisfied in making me unhappy? If you've gone and committed blasphemy as well . . . I don't know what's to become of you, Constantine.

CONSTANTINE. Amelia, if I had been a Mahommedan from the beginning you might be living happily with me now.

MRS. MADRAS. How can you say such a horrible thing? Suppose it were true?

CONSTANTINE. I came from the East.

MRS. MADRAS. You didn't.

CONSTANTINE. Let us be quite accurate. My grandfather was a Smyrna Jew.

MRS. MADRAS. You never knew him. Your mother brought you up a Baptist.

CONSTANTINE. I was an unworthy Baptist. As a Baptist I owe you apologies for my conduct. What does that excellent creed owe me for the little hells of temptation and shame and remorse that I passed through because of it?

MRS. MADRAS [*in pathetic wonder*]. Did you, Constantine?

CONSTANTINE. I did.

MRS. MADRAS. You never told me.

CONSTANTINE [*with manly pride*]. I should think not.

MRS. MADRAS. But I was longing to have you say you were sorry, and let me forgive you. Twice and three times I'd have forgiven you . . . and you knew it, Constantine.

[CONSTANTINE *recovers his humour, his cool courtesy, and his inhumanity, which he had momentarily lost*]

CONSTANTINE. Yes, it wasn't so easy to escape your forgiveness. If it weren't for Mahomet, the Prophet of God, Amelia, I should hardly be escaping it now.

[PHILIP *comes delicately in*]

PHILIP. I beg pardon . . . only my book.

[*Which he takes from the piano*]

CONSTANTINE. Don't go, Phil.

[*So* PHILIP *joins them, and then, as silence supervenes, says, with obvious cheerfulness*]

PHILIP. How are you getting on?

MRS. MADRAS [*her tongue released*]. Philip, don't be flippant. It's just as your cousin Ernest said. Your father has gone and pretended to marry a lot of wretched women out in that country you showed me on the map, and I don't know what's to be done. My head's going round.

CONSTANTINE. Not a lot, Amelia.

MRS. MADRAS. And if anybody had told me, when I was a girl at school, and learning about such things in History and Geography, that I should ever find myself in such a situation as this, I wouldn't have believed them. [*She piles up the agony*] Constantine, how are you going to face me Hereafter? Have you thought of that? Wasn't our marriage made in Heaven? I must know what is going to happen to us . . . I simply must. I have always prayed that you might come back to me, and that I might close your eyes in death. You know I have, Philip, and I've asked you to tell him so. He has no right to go and do such wicked things. You're mine in the sight of God, Constantine, and you can't deny it.

[*Without warning*, CONSTANTINE *loses his temper, jumps up and thunders at her*]

CONSTANTINE. Woman . . . be silent. [*Then, as in shame, he turns his back on her and says in the coldest voice . . .*] Philip, I have several things to talk over with you. Suggest to your mother that she should leave us alone.

PHILIP [*protesting against both temper and dignity*]. I shall do nothing of the sort. While my father's in England, and you're in our house, he can at least treat his wife with politeness.

MRS. MADRAS [*with meek satisfaction*]. I'd rather he didn't . . . it's only laughing at me. I'll go to bed. I'd much rather he lost his temper.

[*She gets up to go.* CONSTANTINE'S *bitter voice stops her*]

CONSTANTINE. Phil . . . when you were a boy . . . your mother and I once quarrelled in your presence.

PHILIP [*in bitterness, too*]. I remember.

CONSTANTINE. I'm ashamed of it to this day.

MRS. MADRAS [*quite pleasantly*]. Well . . . I'm sure I don't remember it. What about?

CONSTANTINE. Oh . . . this terrible country. Every hour I stay in it seems to rob me of some atom of self-respect.

[MRS. MADRAS *joins battle again at this*]

MRS. MADRAS. Then why did you come back? And why haven't you been to see me before . . . or written to me?

CONSTANTINE [*in humorous despair*]. Amelia, don't aggravate me any more. Go to bed, if you're going.

MRS. MADRAS. I wish I'd never seen you again.

PHILIP. Good-night, Mother.

[PHILIP *gets her to the door and kisses her kindly. Then* CONSTANTINE *says, with all the meaning possible . . .*]

CONSTANTINE. Good-bye, Amelia.

[*She turns, the bright hall light falling on her, looks at him hatefully, makes no other reply, goes.* PHILIP *comes back to the fire. All this is bitter to him, too. He eyes his father*]

CONSTANTINE. I'm sorry. I'm upset. I was upset when I came here.

PHILIP. What about? The visit to Denmark Hill?

CONSTANTINE [*who has apparently forgotten that*]. No . . . I didn't go there, after all.

PHILIP. Funked it?

CONSTANTINE [*accepting the gibe*]. I daresay. Once we were off the bus, Harry began to mutter about hurting their feelings. I daresay I was funking, too. I told him to tell them how unbendingly moral he had been with me. He shed three tears as we parted.

PHILIP. Yes . . . my mother was alone here. She's a disappointed woman . . . peevish with ill health. One has her at a disadvantage. But Aunt Kate . . . unveiled and confident, with six corseted daughters to back her!

CONSTANTINE. You think, of course, that I've always treated your mother badly?

PHILIP. I can't help thinking so. Was it the only way to treat her?

CONSTANTINE. Was I meant to pass the rest of a lifetime making her forget that she was as unhappy as people who have outlived their purpose always are?

PHILIP. Personally, I have this grudge against you both, my dear father. As the son of a quarrelsome marriage, I have grown up inclined to dislike men and despise women. You're so full of this purpose of getting the next generation born. Suppose you thought a little more of its upbringing.

CONSTANTINE. What was wrong with yours?

PHILIP. I had no home.

CONSTANTINE. You spent a Sunday with me every month. You went to the manliest school I could find.

PHILIP. Never mind how I learnt Latin and Greek. Who taught me that every pretty, helpless woman was a man's prey . . . and how to order my wife out of the room?

CONSTANTINE [*with a shrug*]. My dear boy . . . they like it.

PHILIP. D o they?

CONSTANTINE. Well . . . how else are you to manage them?

PHILIP. Father, don't you realise that . . . in decadent England, at least, this manliness of yours is getting a little out of date . . . that you and your kind begin to look foolish at last?

CONSTANTINE [*voicing the discomfort that possesses him*]. I daresay. Thank God, I shall be quit of the country to-morrow! I got here late this evening because I travelled three stations too far in that Tube, sitting opposite such a pretty little devil. She was so alive . . . so crying out for conquest . . . she had that curve of the instep and the little trick of swinging her foot that I never could resist. How does a man resist it? Yes. That's ridiculous and ignominious and degrading. I escaped from England to escape from it. Old age here . . . a loose lip and a furtive eye. I'd have asked you to shoot me first.

PHILIP. Was it that upset you?

CONSTANTINE. No.

[*He frowns; his thoughts are much elsewhere. There is a moment's silence.* PHILIP *breaks it*]

PHILIP. Father, what do you know about this Miss Yates affair?

[CONSTANTINE *gives him a sharp look; then carefully casual . . .*]

CONSTANTINE. What you've told me.

PHILIP. No more?

CONSTANTINE. Is there more to know?

[PHILIP *fishes out and hands across the letter over which he whistled*]

PHILIP. This has just come from Miss Chancellor.

CONSTANTINE. Who's she?

PHILIP. The housekeeper at Peckham, who rashly accused Brigstock of being the other responsible party.

CONSTANTINE. Is he?

PHILIP. I think not. But she encloses a letter she has just had from Brigstock's solicitors, to the effect that both an apology and compensation is due to him unless the slander is to come into court. Hers faithfully, Meyrick & Hodges.

CONSTANTINE. I don't know them.

PHILIP. We were all still making personal remarks at half-past twelve to-day . . . so by their expedition I should say they both are and are not a first-class firm. But suppose the whole thing is made public . . . then the question of the parentage must be cleared up. Miss Yates says it's nobody's business but hers. That's an odd idea, in which, if she chooses to have it, the law seems to support her.

[*The steady eye and the steady voice have seemed to make the tension unbearable, and* PHILIP *has meant them to. But he hardly expected this outburst.* CONSTANTINE, *in his own dramatically dignified way, has a fit of hysterics*]

CONSTANTINE. Phil, I saw the little baggage when the shop closed. I insisted on her meeting me. You know how I've always behaved over these matters. No one could have been kinder. But she refused money.

PHILIP [*calling on the gods to witness this occasion*]. Well . . . I might have guessed. Oh . . . you incorrigible old man!

CONSTANTINE. She insulted me . . . said she'd done with me . . . denied me the right to my own child. I'd even have taken her away. But you're helpless. I never felt so degraded in my life.

PHILIP. Serve you right!

CONSTANTINE. . . . But the girl's mad! Think of my feelings. What does it make of m e? Did she know what she was saying?

Philip [*framing his thoughts at last*]. Possibly not . . . but I'm thankful some woman's been found at last to put you in your place.

[*These parental-filial passages have brought the two of them face to face, strung to shouting pitch. They become aware of it when* Jessica *walks in very gently*]

Jessica. Your mother gone?

Philip. To bed.

Jessica [*conscious of thunder*]. Am I intruding? I sent Phil in for his book a while ago. He didn't return, so I judged that he was. Perhaps I'm not?

[Constantine *is master of himself again, though the hand holding the letter which* Philip *gave him does tremble a little still*]

Constantine. Well . . . what does Miss Chancellor want?

Philip. She asks my advice.

Constantine. Dismiss Baxter.

Philip. D'you mean Brigstock?

Constantine. Brigstock, then. Dismiss him.

Philip. What's he done to deserve it?

Constantine. He seems a nonentity of a fellow, and without grit enough to own up to his wife and risk his place. D'you want to protect a man from the consequences of what he is?

Philip. Society conspires to.

Constantine. Then pay him fifty pounds for the damage to his silly little reputation. That'll be a just consequence to you of sentimentalising over him.

Philip. And stick to Miss Chancellor?

Constantine. Certainly. Thank her from the firm for nosing out such a scandal.

Philip. And what about Miss Yates?

Jessica. The girl in your office this morning?

Philip. Yes.

Jessica. In the usual trouble?

Philip. How d'you know that?

Jessica. By the tone of your voice.

Constantine [*more slowly, more carefully, a little resentfully*]. Dismiss Miss Yates. Keep your eye on her . . . and in a year's time find her a better place . . . if you can . . . in one of these new Madras Houses of State's. He seems to pay very well. [*Then with a breath of relief he becomes his old charming self again*] Let us change the subject. How is Mildred, Jessica?

Jessica. Growing.

Constantine. I've an appointment with my solicitor to-night . . . ten o'clock. There will be two or three thousand pounds to come to that young lady by my will. I mean to leave it as a dowry for her marriage . . . its interest to be paid to her if she's a spinster at thirty . . . which Heaven forbid.

Philip. What are you doing with the rest, Father?

Constantine. There are one or two . . . legacies of honour, shall I call them? What remains will come to you.

Philip. Yes . . . I don't want it, thank you.

Constantine. It isn't much.

Philip. Take it to Hit, that charming village on the borders of Southern Arabia. Stick it in the ground . . . let it breed more corn and oil for you. We've too much of it already . . . it breeds idleness here.

Constantine. Dear me!

[*They settle into a chat*]

Jessica. We're discussing a r e d u c t i o n of our income by a few hundreds a year.

Philip. I'm refusing State's directorship.

Jessica. Though I'm waiting for Phil to tell me where the saving's to come in.

Philip. We ought to change that school of Mildred's, for one thing.

Jessica. Nonsense, Phil!

Philip. My dear father, I spent a day there with the child, and upon my word, the only thing she's being taught which will not be a mere idle accomplishment is gardening. And even in their gardens . . . No vegetables allowed!

Jessica. Phil, I don't mean to have any nonsense with Mildred about earning her living. Accomplished women have a very good time in this world . . . serious women don't. I want my daughter to be happy.

Philip. If we've only enough life left to be happy with we must keep ourselves decently poor.

[Constantine *gets up*]

Constantine. Could you get me a taxi, I wonder? It had started raining when I came.

PHILIP. There'll be one on the stand opposite.

CONSTANTINE. I mustn't be too late for Voysey. He makes a favour of coming after hours.

JESSICA. I frankly cultivate expensive tastes. I like to have things beautiful around me. I don't know what else civilisation means.

CONSTANTINE. I am sure that Philip can refuse you nothing.

PHILIP. If I do dismiss Miss Yates, I wonder if I could do it brutally enough to induce her to accept some compensation.

JESSICA. What for?

PHILIP. She won't take money from this gentleman . . . whoever he is . . . that is, she won't be bribed into admitting her shame.

JESSICA. When a woman has gone wrong mayn't it be her duty to other women to own up to it?

CONSTANTINE [*who has stood still the while, stroking his beard*]. If your auditors won't pass any decent sum, I should be happy to send you a cheque, Phil.

PHILIP [*with a wry smile*]. That would be very generous of you, Father.

CONSTANTINE. Good-bye, Jessica.

JESSICA. Good-bye.

CONSTANTINE. Philip is fortunate in his marriage.

JESSICA. So good of you to remind him of that.

CONSTANTINE. You have a charming home. I wonder how much of your womanly civilisation it would have needed to conquer me. Well . . . I leave you to your conversation. A pleasant life to you.

[*He bends over her hand as if to kiss it. She takes it, as if fastidiously, out of his soft grasp. So he bows again and leaves her*]

CONSTANTINE. Victoria at eleven o'clock to-morrow, Philip.

PHILIP. Yes . . . I'll see you off.

CONSTANTINE. I have to do a little shopping quite early.

PHILIP. Shopping! What can the West send the East?

CONSTANTINE. I must take back a trinket or two.

PHILIP. To be sure. We do the same on our travels.

[PHILIP *sees him through the hall to the front door, hails a stray cab, and is quit of him.* JESSICA *moves about as if to free the air of this visitation, and when* PHILIP *comes back . . .*]

JESSICA. Does your father usually scatter cheques so generously and carelessly?

PHILIP. Jessica, while I have every respect for that young lady's independence . . . still two hundred pounds would be all to the good of the child's upbringing . . . and why shouldn't Miss Yates keep her secret?

JESSICA. Yes. I don't like your father. And I'm sometimes afraid that you're only an intellectual edition of him. It's very vital, of course, to go about seducing everybody to your own way of thinking. But really it's not quite civilised. You ought to learn to talk about the weather.

PHILIP. I cannot talk about what can't be helped.

[*He had settled to a chair and a cigarette, but on the impulse he abandons both and starts a lively argument instead.* PHILIP'S *excited arguments are carried on in short dashes about the room and with queer un-English gestures*]

PHILIP. And I wonder more and more what the devil you all mean by civilisation. This room is civilisation. Whose civilisation? Not ours.

JESSICA [*in mock despair*]. Oh, dear!

PHILIP. Cheer up. Didn't you marry me because I thought more of Bach than Offenbach? Why shouldn't you share a fresh set of convictions? This sort of marriage is worth while, you know. Even one's quarrels have a certain dignity.

JESSICA. Go ahead . . . bless your heart.

PHILIP [*shaking his fist at the world in general*]. Whitechapel High Street's our civilisation.

JESSICA. I don't know it.

PHILIP. Therefore you don't much matter, my dear . . . any more than my father did with his view of life as a sort of love-chase. [*He surveys the charming room that is his home*] Persian carpet on the floor. Last Supper, by Ghirlandajo, over the mantelpiece. The sofa you're sitting on was made in a forgotten France. This is a museum. And down at that precious school what are they cultivating Mildred's mind into but another museum . . . of good manners and good taste and . . . [*He*

catches Jessica's *half scornful, half kindly-quizzical look*] Are we going to have a row about this?

Jessica. If you Idealists want Mildred to live in the Whitechapel Road . . . make it a fit place for her.

Philip [*taking the thrust and enjoyably returning it*]. When she lives in it it will become so. Why do I give up designing dresses and running a fashion shop to go on the County Council . . . if I can get on? And not to cut a fine figure there, either. But to be on a committee or committees. Not to talk finely even then . . . Lord keep me from the temptation . . . but to do dull, hard work over drains and disinfectants and . . .

Jessica. Well . . . why, Phil? I may as well know.

Philip. To save my soul alive.

Jessica. I'm sure I hope you may. But what is it we're to cultivate in poor Mildred's soul?

[Philip *stops in his walk, and then* . . .]

Philip. Why not a sense of ugliness? Have you ever really looked at a London street . . . walked slowly up and down it three times . . . carefully testing it with every cultured sense?

Jessica. Yes . . . it's loathsome.

Philip. Then what have you done?

Jessica. What can one do?

Philip. Come home to play a sonata of Beethoven! Does that drown the sights and the sounds and the smell of it?

Jessica. Yes . . . it does.

Philip [*in fierce revolt*]. Not to me . . . my God . . . not to me!

Jessica [*gently bitter*]. For so many women, Phil, art has to make life possible.

Philip. Suppose we teach Mildred to look out of the window at the life outside. We want to make that impossible. Neither Art nor Religion nor good manners have made of the world a place I'll go on living in if I can help it. [*He throws himself into a chair*] D'you remember in my young days when I used to spend part of a holiday lecturing on Shelley?

Jessica. Yes.

Philip. I remember once travelling in the train with a poor wretch who lived . . . so he told me . . . on what margins of profit he could pick up by standing rather incompetently between the corn field and the baker . . . or the coal mine and the fire . . . or the landowner and the tenant . . . I forget which. And he was weary and irritable and unhealthy. And he hated Jones . . . because Jones had done him out of a half per cent. on two hundred and fifty pounds . . . and if the sum had been bigger he'd have sued him, so he would. And the end of Prometheus was running in my head . . . This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free . . . and I thought him a mean fellow. And then he told me how he dreaded bankruptcy, and how his uncle, who had been a clerk, had come to the workhouse . . . and what a disgrace that was. And I'm afraid he was a little drunk. And I wondered whether it would be possible to interest him in the question of Shelley's position as a prosodist . . . or whether even the beauties of Prometheus would comfort him at all. But when he asked me what I was going to Manchester for . . . do you know, I was ashamed to tell him?

[*There falls a little silence. Their voices hardly break it*]

Jessica. Yes . . . a terrible world . . . an ugly, stupid, wasteful world. A hateful world!

Philip. And yet we have to teach Mildred what love of the world means, Jessica. Even if it's an uncomfortable business. Even if it means not adding her to that aristocracy of good feeling and good taste . . . the very latest of class distinctions. I tell you I haven't come by these doubts so easily. Beautiful sounds and sights and thoughts are all of the world's heritage I care about. Giving them up is like giving my carefully created soul out of my keeping before I die.

Jessica [*with a sudden fling of her hands*]. And into whose?

Philip [*shaking his head at the fire*]. I'm afraid into the keeping of everybody we are at present tempted to dislike and despise. For that's Public Life. That's Democracy. But that's the Future. [*He looks across at his wife half curiously*] I know it's even harder for you women. You put off your armour for a man you love. But otherwise you've your Honour and Dignity and Purity . . .

Jessica. Do you want a world without that, either?

Philip. I rather want to know just

what the world gets by it. Those six thin girls at my uncle's . . . what do we get from them or they from the world? Little Miss Yates, now . . . her transgressions may be the most profitable thing about her . . .

JESSICA. Two wrongs don't make a right.

PHILIP [*quaintly*]. They often do . . . properly mixed. Of course you women could serve yourselves up to such lords of creation as my father quite profitably, in one sense, if you would.

JESSICA [*her lip curling*]. Thank you . . . we're not cattle.

PHILIP. No. Then there's a price to be paid for free womanhood, I think . . . and how many of you ladies are willing to pay it? Come out and be common women among us common men? [*He leans towards her, and his voice deepens*] Jessica, do you feel that it was you shot that poor devil six months ago? . . . that it's you who are to be hanged to-morrow?

JESSICA. I don't think I do.

PHILIP. That it's your body is being sold on some street this evening?

[*She gives a little most genuine shudder*]

JESSICA. I hate to think about such things.

PHILIP [*summing up*]. Then there's precious little hope for the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. I know it sounds mere nonsense, but I'm sure it's true. If we can't love the bad as well as the beautiful . . . if we won't share it all out now . . . fresh air and art . . . and dirt and sin . . . then we good and clever people are costing the world too much. Our brains cost too much if we don't give them freely. Your beauty costs too much if I only admire it because of the uglier women I see . . . even your virtue may cost too much, my dear. Rags pay for finery and ugliness for beauty, and sin pays for virtue. Why can nothing keep for long more beauty in a good man's eyes than the ugliest thing on earth? Why need no man be wiser than the biggest fool on earth? Why does it profit neither man nor woman to be more righteous than the greatest sinner on earth? [*He clenches his hands*] These are the riddles this Sphinx of a world is asking me. Your artists and scholars and preachers don't answer them . . . so I must turn my back for a bit on artist and scholar and preacher . . . all three.

[JESSICA *looks at him as he completes his apologia, sympathetic, if not understanding. Then she rallies him cheerfully*]

JESSICA. Meanwhile, my dear Phil, I shall not stop subscribing to the London Symphony Concerts . . . and I shall expect you to take me occasionally.

PHILIP [*jumping back from his philosophic world*]. Oh . . . that reminds me . . . I've a message for you from Tommy.

JESSICA. Have you? He was really irritating this morning.

PHILIP. We must take Tommy with a sense of humour. It wasn't so much a message as one of those little bursts of childlike confidence . . . he endears himself to one with them from time to time.

JESSICA. About me?

PHILIP. Yes. What it comes to is this. Will you please not flirt with him any more, because he hasn't the time, and he's too fond both of me and his wife to want to find himself seriously in love with you.

[*Now* PHILIP *has not said this unguardedly, and* JESSICA *knows it. She'll walk into no little trap set for her vanity or the like. Still, it is with hardly a steady voice that she says simply . . .*]

JESSICA. Thank you for the message.

[PHILIP *goes cheerfully on; he is turning the pages of his book*]

PHILIP. He doesn't at all suppose you are in love with him . . . seriously or otherwise.

JESSICA [*steadily*]. Do you?

PHILIP. No.

JESSICA [*her tone sharpening still*]. And is this the first time you've discussed me with Tommy or anyone? Please let it be the last.

PHILIP. Are you angry, Jessica?

JESSICA. I'm more than angry.

PHILIP. I'm sorry.

[*Having kept her temper successfully, if not the sense of humour which* PHILIP *warned her he was appealing to,* JESSICA *now allows herself a deliberate outburst of indignation*]

JESSICA. I despise men. I despised them when I was fifteen . . . the first year I was conscious of them. I've

been through many opinions since . . . and I come back to despising them.

PHILIP. He was afraid you wouldn't be pleased with him. But he has my sympathies, Jessica.

JESSICA [*throwing back her head*]. Has he!

PHILIP. Tommy is what the entertaining State called this afternoon the Mean Sensual Man.

JESSICA [*with utter contempt*]. Yes. When we're alone, having a jolly talk about things in general, he's all the time thinking I want him to kiss me.

PHILIP. While what you really want is to have him wanting to kiss you but never to kiss you.

JESSICA [*in protest*]. No.

PHILIP [*fixing her with a finger*]. Oh, yes, Jessica.

[JESSICA'S *sense of humour returns for a moment*]

JESSICA. Well . . . I can't help it if he does.

PHILIP. You can, of course. And the Mean Sensual Man calls it being made a fool of.

[*She puts a serious face on it again; not that she can keep one with* PHILIP'S *twinkling at her*]

JESSICA. I give you my word I've never tried to flirt with Tommy . . . except once or twice when he has been boring me. And perhaps once or twice when I was in the dumps . . . and there he was . . . and I was boring him. I know him too well to flirt with him . . . you can't flirt with a man you know well. But he's been boring me lately, and I suppose I've been a bit bored. But suppose I have been flirting with him . . . I thought he was safe enough. [*That attempt failing, there is a tack left, and on this she really manages to work herself back to indignation*] And a caddish thing to go speaking to you about it.

PHILIP. So he said . . . so he said.

JESSICA. Worse than caddish . . . outrageous! I never heard of such a thing . . . you shouldn't have let him.

PHILIP. Should I have knocked him down when he mentioned your name?

JESSICA. Yes . . . I wish you had.

PHILIP. Little savage!

JESSICA. I can't laugh about this. I'm hurt.

PHILIP. My dear, if you have any sense at all, you'll ask him to dinner and chaff him about it . . . before me.

JESSICA. Have you any understanding of what a woman feels when men treat her like this? Degraded and cheapened.

[*But the high moral tone* PHILIP *will not stand. He drops chaff and tackles her*]

PHILIP. I can tell you what the man feels. He'll be either my father or me. That's your choice. Tommy's my father when you've put on your best gown to attract him, or he's me when he honestly says that he'd rather you wouldn't. Do you want him to be me or my father? That's the first question for you.

JESSICA. I want a man to treat a woman with courtesy and respect.

PHILIP. And what does that come to? My dear, don't you know that the Mean Sensual Man . . . no, not Tommy for the moment, but say Dick or Harry . . . looks on you all as choice morsels . . . with your prettinesses, your dressings up, your music and art as so much sauce to his appetite. Which only a mysterious thing called your virtue prevents him from indulging . . . almost by force, if it weren't for the police, Jessica. Do you like that?

JESSICA. I don't believe it.

PHILIP. Do you really believe that most men's good manners towards most pretty women are anything else but good manners?

JESSICA. I prefer good manners to yours. [*Then, both fine taste and sense of humour to the rescue again*] No . . . that's rude.

PHILIP [*with much more affection than the words convey*]. I treat you as a man would treat another man . . . neither better nor worse. Is the compliment quite wasted?

JESSICA [*as amazed at this unreasonable world*]. I want to be friends with men. I'd sooner be friends with them. It's they who flirt with me. Why?

PHILIP [*incurably mischievous*]. Of course I've forgotten what you look like, and I never notice what you have on . . . but I suspect it's because you're rather pretty and attractive.

JESSICA. Do you want women not to be?

PHILIP. No.

JESSICA. It's perfectly sickening. Of course, if I had dozens of children,

and grew an old woman with the last one, I should be quite out of danger. But we can't all be like that . . . you don't want us to be.

PHILIP [*purely negative*]. No.

[*He leaves her free to justify herself*]

JESSICA. I do my share of things. I make a home for you. I entertain your friends. It may cost your precious world too much . . . my civilisation . . . but you want all this done. [*Then with a certainly womanly reserve*] And Phil . . . suppose I'm not much nicer by nature than some of you men? When I was a baby, if I'd not been fastidious I should have been a sad glutton. My culture . . . my civilisation . . . mayn't be quite up to keeping the brilliant Tommy a decent friend to me, but it has its uses.

[*But* PHILIP *means to laugh this out of court, too*]

PHILIP. Look here, if it's only your culture keeps you from kissing Tommy . . . kiss him.

[*To be so driven from pillar to post really does exasperate her*]

JESSICA. Phil . . . I sometimes think I'd sooner have been married to your father.

PHILIP. Why?

JESSICA. If you went on as he did instead of as you do . . . I should be sorry . . . I should despise you . . . but it would string me up and add to my self-respect enormously! [*Then a little appealingly*] But it's when you're inhuman, Phil . . . that I'm ever so little tempted.

PHILIP [*contrite at once*]. I know I am. [*Then he gets up to stand looking into the fire, and what he says is heartfelt*]. But I do so hate that farm-yard world of sex . . . men and women always treating each other in this unfriendly way . . . that I'm afraid it hardens me a bit.

JESSICA [*from her side, gently, with just a look at him*]. I hate it, too . . . but I happen to love you, Phil.

[*They smile at each other*]

PHILIP. Yes, my dear. If you'd kindly come over here . . . I should like to kiss you.

JESSICA. I won't. You can come over to me.

PHILIP. Will you meet me half way?

[*They meet half way, and kiss as husband and wife can. They stand together, looking into the fire*]

PHILIP. Do you know the sort of world I want to live in?

JESSICA. Should I like it?

PHILIP. Hasn't Humanity come of age at last?

JESSICA. Has it?

PHILIP. Mayn't we hope so? Finery sits so well on children. And they strut and make love absurdly . . . even their quarrelling is in all good faith and innocence. But I don't see why we men and women should not find all happiness . . . and beauty, too, . . . in soberer purposes. And with each other . . . why not always some touch of the tranquil understanding which is yours and mine, dear, at the best of moments?

JESSICA [*happily*]. Do you mean when we sometimes suddenly want to shake hands?

PHILIP [*happily, too*]. That's it. And I want an art and a culture that sha'n't be just a veneer on savagery . . . but it must spring in good time from the happiness of a whole people.

[JESSICA *gives herself one little shake of womanly commonsense*]

JESSICA. Well, what's to be done?

PHILIP [*nobody more practical than he*]. I've been making suggestions. We must learn to live on a thousand a year . . . put Mildred to a sensible school . . . and I must go on the County Council. That's how these great spiritual revolutions work out in practice, to begin with.

JESSICA [*as one who demands a right*]. Where's my share of the job?

PHILIP [*conscious of some helplessness*]. How is a man to tell you? There's enough to choose from.

JESSICA [*the burden of her sex's present fate upon her*]. Ah, you're normal. Nobody sizes you up as a good man or a bad man . . . pretty or plain. There's a trade for bad women and several professions for plain ones. But I've been taught how to be charming and to like dainty clothes. And I dare say I'm excitable and emotional . . . but I can't help it. I'm well off, married to you, I know. You do make me forget I'm a female occasionally.

PHILIP. Male and female created He them . . . and left us to do the rest. Men and women are a long time in the making . . . aren't they?

JESSICA [*enviously*]. Oh . . . you're all right.

PHILIP [*with some humble knowledge of himself*]. Are we?

JESSICA. But I tell you, Phil, it isn't so easy for us. You don't always let us have the fairest of chances, do you?

PHILIP. No, I grant it's not easy. But it's got to be done.

JESSICA. Yes . . .

[*She doesn't finish, for really there is no end to the subject. But for a moment or two longer, happy together, they stand looking into the fire*]

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT

(1910)

By John Masefield

JOHN MASEFIELD

In his essay on Defoe, John Masefield has written that "a man is judged by the intensity and nobleness of his spiritual convictions." This criticism may very well be applied to Masefield himself. When he returned to America, in 1916, after an absence of over twenty years, having won for himself a foremost position among the younger school of English writers, we were able to judge for ourselves how much the literary expression of the artist represented the spiritual fervour of the man.

It may be a dangerous thing for the literary historian to accept Taine's theory so far as to detect, in casual instances, the influences of a man's life. Masefield has himself said that one can never know one's influences. But we may doubt whether, if he had not gone to sea as a boy, we should have been given such an excellent anthology as "A Sailor's Garland." If he had remained at home, would he have written such graphic sketches of the life and superstitions of the seaman as mark "A Mainsail Haul"? But Masefield did go to sea. He entrained for two years, thinking that his life would be spent aboard a merchantman, and it was while he was on a ship, going to America to take up a commission, that he fought out with himself the problem of a future. He had reached the point where he had to cast the die. During this trip, he realized that, with the promptings in him to write, on the one hand, and with the training of the sea back of him, on the other, should he accept the commission waiting him in America, the writing impulse would be gone from him forever. So, strange to say, it was not John Masefield, the sailor, who stepped ashore on New York soil, but John Masefield, the author, up against it to such an extent that he scarcely had a sovereign in his pocket. His assets were a whole suit of clothes, a sound pair of shoes, and the unquenchable spirit which still burns from the depths of his blue eyes.

If John Masefield fulfils his destiny, his biographers of the future will picture him in his red shirt on a Connecticut farm as we picture Robert Burns at the plough. Already a Royal Academician has idealized his seamanship, after the manner of an old master picturing Columbus with globes and astrolabes and far-seeing vision. We might even conjecture that some poetic admirer of Masefield, in the future, will write of his experiences in the Yonkers carpet factory, in the same spirit that Hood sang of the famous shirt. But we cannot prophesy how the biographers will account for the days spent in Luke O'Connor's saloon.

Masefield struggled as tempestuously in New York as he did at sea. His chief concern was his daily bread. When the sovereign was spent, he became a frequent visitor at pawn shops on Eighth Avenue and Bleecker Street, dispensing with as much of his wardrobe as expediency allowed. We can imagine him wandering up and down Sixth Avenue, illy clad, in search of a job. It is even hinted that he and his cronies, whom he had picked up at sea, tried street singing for a livelihood. What characteristics in him appealed to the bartender on Sixth Avenue, we do not

know. But it is a fact that, with his tanned face, acquired on the Connecticut farm, and with his rough hands, born of rough handling of sails and ropes, John Masefield did not look like a tenderfoot when he entered the saloon of Luke O'Connor.

We understand from one source that Masefield's boss declared he never attained sufficient dexterity to mix a cocktail. Somewhere in his writings, Masefield himself declares that his duties were:

> To clean the glasses which the two artists filled for the thirsty. I, who was not an artist, and could not mix the subtle drinks in vogue, might only serve beer and cigars. . . . I had to see that the piping through which the beer ran to the taps was kept packed in the ice. . . . Twice a week I had to take down the electric light shades, which were of a pinky-blue porcelain, to wash them carefully with soap and water. . . . I slept in a garret in the hotel.

Seekers after literary influences should turn to Masefield's volume, "The Tarpaulin Muster", where there are several short stories reminiscent of this period. A sympathetic description of the Hudson River appears in the sketch, "On the Palisades", which points to the way in which Masefield spent his spare time when he was relieved from duty at the carpet factory in Yonkers.

One of the most poignant things about Masefield's experiences in New York was the utter loneliness which beset him. It prompted him in after days to write "Multitude and Solitude", as his experiences at sea were the foundations for "Captain Margaret", and such volumes as "On the Spanish Main" and "Sea Life in Nelson's Time." However much, in his early years as a boy, he may have relished "Percy's Reliques", he must have learned the true rhythms for his "Salt Water Ballads" from the throats of the sailors themselves. He steeped himself, during these early years, in the tradition and in the jargon of the sailor, with the consequence that his "Salt Water Ballads" and his "Story of a Round-House" have to carry glossaries for the better understanding of the ordinary reader.

After his return to London, John Masefield began his literary career. The London critics, in their seizure upon the roughest lines in Masefield's work, as a measure of what they liked to call his uncouthness, are forever quoting those significant words of Synge wherein he is credited with having affirmed, "It may almost be said that before verse can be human again, it must learn to be brutal." Because a man like Masefield deems it worthy of his interest to treat of themes like "The Everlasting Mercy" and "The Widow in the Bye Street"; because, in his varied, though short, experience as a seaman, he may have striven to catch something of the fundamental in the life of a sailor; because of his belief that the ugliness of the world has a legitimate place in the beauty of poetry — the reading public is continually allowing its impression of him to be muddled; it is forever identifying him with brutality, irreverence, formalism, when, as a matter of fact, he is the most gentle, the most reverent, and the most precise formalist among the English poets to-day.

As a poet, Masefield has widely contrasting traditions. He has been a wanderer since a very small boy, with little inclination, during his earlier years, to study or be academic. For he ran away from home when he was fourteen. He has literally taken life as an open book, and he has read from life all that which is measure of his soul's penetration. There is a touch of Shropshire, of Devonshire, of Hertfordshire,

in his veins. There is a strain of all that is noble in English verse in his execution, having been influenced by Chaucer and Shakespeare in his common sympathy for humanity, and having from some of the noblest English lyrics gained his facility in lyrical form.

As a workman he is not in sympathy with those loose constructionists who cover up shallowness of thought and paucity of vision with a free use of slipshod form. To judge by a comparison of certain poems contained in his "Salt Water Ballads", and repeated in his "The Story of a Round-House", Masefield, like Tennyson before him, is continually editing himself, feeling for the right word, for the simplest, rather than for the most ornate form. To him writing is not a painful process, but a very serious occupation. And when we hear him say that he re-wrote "Pompey the Great" eleven times, though some may see in this fact an effort in the peculiar style which marks the play, others truly see in it only that sensitiveness, that acute ear for fine work which is a rare and unusual quality in the writing of to-day.

Masefield has within him the freedom of the sea, the freedom of the untrammelled road; his verse fairly tingles with the memory of them. He is a man of spiritual and physical adaptability. He finds any road a splendid road. He finds all men under all conditions — save those whose life is being frittered away — worthy of prayer. From the time of his literary beginnings, he has been an incessant worker, attempting every form of expression — the novel, the lyric, the narrative poem, the drama, and now, during these war days, descriptive history. It is not too much to say that in his "Dauber" he has given us one of the greatest sea poems in English literary history; that in "The Widow in the Bye Street" he has raised common clay to a poetic level, in a manner worthy of Whitman; that in the realm of the theatre he has, in "The Tragedy of Nan", given us a one-act drama which has done for English country life what Synge's "Riders to the Sea" and "The Shadow of the Glen" have done for the Aran Islands. If Shaw has builded better than he intended in "Caesar and Cleopatra", Masefield has, in "Pompey the Great", attacked the rewriting of history with as fervent a desire to apply forces of the past to conditions of the present.

Masefield owes his literary beginnings to Yeats. He owes much of his attitude toward art to his inspiring friendship with Synge. Outside of these men, he confesses he does not know what his literary influences are. He is impressed with a certain theme, and he lays it by for years to come. The legend of "The Faithful" was pondered over for many years before he made use of it. "The Tragedy of Nan" and "The Campden Wonder" are as true reflections of the life with which, at some time or other, he has come in contact, as "The Widow in the Bye Street" and "The Everlasting Mercy."

In all he does, his is a man's vision purely, but that does not prevent him from showing the exquisiteness and gentleness of a woman in his work. His love poems addressed to his wife are full of lyricism and tenderness. They are full of fervour. His scenes between *Pompey* and *Cornelia* in "Pompey the Great" are filled with that spiritual understanding which only a man of spiritual depth can comprehend. No life experiences of great moment have been ignored by Masefield; they have always been interpreted by him in spiritual terms. The only poems he has written since the outbreak of the Great War have been that very remarkable series of Sonnets contained in his "Good Friday and Other Poems." One only has to read his "Gallipoli" — for John Masefield has been through the Dardanelles campaign

and has followed, as an official historian, the Battle of the Somme — to detect the effect forces of war have had upon a sensitive personality. Masefield writes his war impressions with a realism that is softened by poetic feeling and by far-reaching vision, — that realism which bares to the bone the cruelty of the ravages of sword and fire, and which is the same realism one detects in the sheer little tragedy of "Nan."

"Pompey the Great" is written with an attempt at realistic treatment. It has a tendency to colloquialism, just as Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra" has. It is treated with the reverence of one who has been impelled to write of *Pompey* in the spirit of friend and defender.

The sum total of Masefield's work tends toward tragedy, rather than toward comedy. His style, in dramatic writing, is precise, formal, experimental in its crisp manner, which in "Pompey the Great" becomes a mannerism, where punctuation reduces itself to periods and question marks and exclamations. He was once heard to say, "I like precise things. I like the form of Racine."

As a dramatist, Masefield has figured in the English renaissance represented by the history of the Court Theatre under Granville Barker's management, and by the repertory theatre under the guidance of Charles Frohman. His "The Tragedy of Nan" and his "The Campden Wonder" were in the repertory of the former, and among Frohman's ambitious schemes was to give an adequate production of "The Tragedy of Pompey the Great." His work has flourished, like Synge's and Dunsany's, on the repertory idea; and thus far he has done for the English stage only that which would bring it strength rather than what would bring him material success. Much more generally has he been accepted as a poet and as a novelist.

At first, "Pompey the Great" was conceived in Masefield's mind as a one-act play; but, after he had considered the subject carefully, he found that there was too much to be stated, and so he turned to a longer drama. He had read Plutarch, and had thus first been attracted to the figure of *Pompey*. This attraction became determination when, at the end of Plutarch's Life of Pompey, he read the splendid description of the closing days of *Pompey's* life. This description may be taken as the incentive behind the drama. He went through Caesar's Civil War, Lucian's "Pharsalia", Appion's "History"; and he read biographies in the classical dictionaries. But nothing fired him more, in the determination to do justice to *Pompey*, than his reading of Mommsen, from whom he wished to vindicate the Roman Emperor. His interest in the portraits of *Pompey* on coins and marble busts and in the people surrounding *Pompey* is measured by the notes which are appended to his tragedy.

"Pompey the Great" has been presented many times, once by the Stage Society, another time by F. R. Benson, at Stratford. There is a record of an excellent performance given by students at Manchester. It has not been produced, thus far, in America. Herbert Trench, writing of the play, as viewed upon the stage, said:

> Mr. Masefie'd does not wholly succeed, perhaps because he aims at comprehending more than his theme. Portraying hasty Romans, he has an eye on England, and on the more vulgar and blatant forms of Imperialism, on bureaucracy at Whitehall, on the Boer Wars, on the House of Lords.

Certainly, the democratic spirit which pervades this piece, and which beauty of form and richness of imagination only make more impressive, is like the democratic

force at work in the world to-day. The philosophy in it may be too contemplative for drama in the popular sense. It may be too lofty in its historical attitude, but there is nobility of character which, were an actor sufficiently large to compass the part, would transcend all shortcomings in action and in moving situation. Unlike "Caesar and Cleopatra", it is lacking in humour. In fact, Masefield, as poet and dramatist, is lacking in humour. But what saves him from austerity and unyielding gloom are his infinite compassion and his abounding sympathy with all forms of human life.

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT

By JOHN MASEFIELD

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By JOHN MASEFIELD.

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TO

MY WIFE

ARGUMENT

In the years 50 and 49 B.C., Cneius Pompeius Magnus, the head of the patrician party, contested with C. Julius Cæsar, the popular leader, for supreme power in the State. Their jealousy led to the troubles of the Civil War, in which, after many battles, Cneius Pompeius Magnus was miserably killed.

Act I. The determination of Pompeius to fight with his rival, then marching upon Rome.

Act II. The triumph of Pompey's generalship at Dyrrachium. His overthrow by the generals of his staff. His defeat at Pharsalia.

Act III. The death of that great ruler on the seashore of Pelusium in Egypt.

PERSONS

Antistia.
Philip.
A Lute-Girl.
Cornelia.
Julia.
Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio.
Cneius Pompeius Magnus (called Pompey the Great).
Cneius Pompeius Theophanes.
Marcus Porcius Cato.
A Gaulish Lancer.
Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus.
Cotta, a Centurion.
Marcus Acilius Glabrio.
Lucius Lucceius.
Lucius Afranius.
Publius Lentulus Spinther.
A Ship-Captain.
A Ship-Boy.
A Mate.
A Boatswain.
Achillas Egyptian.
Lucius Septimius.
Centurions, Sentries, Soldiers, Trumpeters, Sailors.

	Scene.	Time.
Act I.	Rome.	January A.U.C. 705 (B.C. 50).
Act II.	Dyrrachium.	July A.U.C. 706.
	Pharsalia.	August A.U.C. 709 (June, B.C. 48).
Act III.	Pelusium.	September A.U.C. 706 (Aug. B.C. 48).

THE CAST FOR THE STAGE SOCIETY PRODUCTION

December, 1910

Antistia	Miss Adeline Bourne
Philip	Mr. Jules Shaw
Cornelia	Miss Jean Sterling
Julia	Miss Isabel Ohmead
Q. Cæcilius Metellus Pius Scipio	Mr. Lawrence Hanray
Cneius Pompeius Magnus	Mr. Herbert Greenwood
Cneius Pompeius Theophanes	Mr. Tripp Edgar
Marcus Porcius Cato	Mr. A. S. Homewood
A Gaulish Lancer	Mr. H. Lawrence Leyton
Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus	Mr. Grendon Bentley
Publius Lentulus Spinther	Mr. R. Hutton
Orderly	Mr. E. Cresfan
Cotta	Mr. Guy Rathbone
Marcus Acilius Glabrio	Mr. Ewan Brook
Lucius Lucceius	Mr. Alfred A. Harris
Second Centurion	Mr. Rathmell Wilson
Third Centurion	Mr. Charles Bishop
Fourth Centurion	Mr. Tom Ronald
Chantyman	Mr. Rathmell Wilson
First Sailor	Mr. Charles Bishop
Second Sailor	Mr. Tom Ronald
A Mate	Mr. H. Lawrence Leyton
A Ship-Captain	Mr. Edmund Gurney
A Ship-Boy	Master Philip Tonge
Achillas	Mr. Alfred A. Harris
Lucius Septimius	Mr. E. Cresfan

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT

ACT I

A room in POMPEY'S *house near Rome. Walls hung with draperies of a dark blue. Doors curtained. Balcony, open, showing distant lights. A gong and mallet. Wine, glasses, etc. Papers in a casket. Lamps.*

Horns without as troops pass. ANTISTIA *alone, lighting lamps with a taper.*

ANTISTIA [*looking towards the window*]. More soldiers. Blow your horns. Spread your colours, ensign. Your colours'll be dust the sooner. Your breath will be in the wind, a little noise in the night. That's what you come to, soldiers. Dust, and a noise in the trees. Dust, and the window rattling. No more flags and horns then. [*Lighting the last lamp*] I wish I knew the rights of it. [*Settling books on table*] I wish Philip would come.

A VOICE [*without, in the balcony*]. Pompey.

ANTISTIA. What was that?

THE VOICE. Pompey.

ANTISTIA [*frightened*]. Who calls Pompey?

THE VOICE. Not so loud. Not so loud, Pompey.

ANTISTIA. What is it? What d' you want with Pompey?

THE VOICE. Philip must tell Pompey at once.

ANTISTIA. What must he tell him?

THE VOICE. To stamp his foot at once.

ANTISTIA. To stamp his foot at once?

THE VOICE [*amid laughter*]. Stamp your foot, Pompey. Aha! Ha! Pompey.

ANTISTIA [*going to the window*]. What's this? Who are you?

THE VOICE [*going*]. Aha! Pompey. Stamp your feet, Pompey.

ANTISTIA [*going to a door, scared*]. Philip, Philip.

PHILIP [*putting down tray*]. What's the matter? What's happened?

ANTISTIA. There was a voice. A voice. Something at the window. Jeering Pompey.

PHILIP [*opening window*]. Come out of that. There's no one there now. Was it a man?

ANTISTIA. There was no one. It had a man's voice. It spoke. It laughed.

PHILIP. It's gone. It's gone, my dear. Don't. Don't. It's gone.

ANTISTIA. They say that the dead come back. To cry in the night [*pause*] whenever bad times are coming. Dead men's souls. They want blood. Licking. Licking blood in the night. Whenever Rome's in danger.

PHILIP. Hush. Hush. Don't talk such things. It gives them life. What was it saying?

THE VOICE. Stamp your foot, Pompey. Stamp your foot, Pompey.

ANTISTIA. Ah!

PHILIP [*exorcising at window, with things from tray*]. Wine for blood. [*Pours wine*] Bread for flesh. [*Breaks bread*] Salt for life. [*Flings salt*] A cloak of blue on Rome. A net of gold over this house. To the desert. To the night without stars. To the wastes of the sea. To the two-forked flame. [*Returning heavily*] God save my dear master, Pompey. I fear there's trouble coming.

ANTISTIA [*hysterically*]. Ah! Ah!

PHILIP [*pouring water*]. Drink this. Drink this. I'll fetch another glass.

ANTISTIA [*hysterically*]. Not off that tray. Not off that tray.

PHILIP. There. There. God save us! Why, Antistia, they've no power.

ANTISTIA. I see the marching of armies. Dust. Dust. That is what the trumpets mean. War. Civil War.

Pompey and Cæsar. Like eagles struggling.

PHILIP. No. No. Don't say that. You bring things to pass.

ANTISTIA. What else could it mean? What did it mean?

PHILIP [*distractedly*]. I don't rightly know what it said.

ANTISTIA. About stamping? About Pompey stamping?

PHILIP. Pompey said it. In the Senate yesterday. Reports came in. There was a panic. The Senators were at their wits' ends. News came that Cæsar was marching on Rome. They asked Pompey if he had an army. If he could defend them.

ANTISTIA. Is Cæsar coming?

PHILIP. It was one of these wild rumours.

ANTISTIA. What did Pompey say?

PHILIP. He said if he stamped his foot, soldiers would spring up all over Italy. Armies of soldiers. To drive Cæsar back into Gaul.

ANTISTIA. And now he must stamp his foot. Cæsar's on the road with his army.

PHILIP. It's time for the house to shake when the door-posts quarrel.

[*Pausing at distant tumult*]

ANTISTIA. They're proud ones, to set the world on fire so as one of them may warm his hands.

PHILIP. Pompey's only defending the State. He thinks he's a great one, Cæsar does, now that he's conquered Gaul. What are the Gauls? The Gauls are naked heathen, with copper swords like the savages. Why, Cæsar would never have been anybody if Pompey hadn't backed him.

ANTISTIA. That's reason enough for him to fight Pompey now.

PHILIP. Pompey made him what he is. Pompey got him his place in Gaul. He was no one before that. [*Pause*] And now he hopes to put Pompey down. So he can rule Rome instead. Put my master Pompey down.

ANTISTIA. I suppose Cæsar couldn't beat Pompey, Philip?

PHILIP. Antistia. [*Solemnly*] Don't you talk like that, Antistia. I believe wherever Pompey goes, there goes a god in front of him. Like fire. It's that makes him what he is. Oh,. my dear beloved master. I'm that drove mad, I can't hardly talk of it. That he should have a civil war with Cæsar. And him only newly married.

ANTISTIA. It was a civil war that first made Pompey famous, Philip.

PHILIP. He was with Sulla, against Marius. In the civil wars then. And ever since then he's gone on. Just as though a god went before him, brushing a road for him. You would see nothing but dangers all round. And Pompey would ride up. And [*he blows in his hand*] puff. They'd fade. They'd go. [*Pause*] I've seen all Rome out on the roofs to see my master, Pompey. Triumph? There were horns blowing, you couldn't hear. And forty kings marching barefoot in the streets. I've seen him grow to be the greatest man in the world.

ANTISTIA. Eh? The greatest man in the world. And all through being with Sulla in the civil war. Supposing he were not great, Philip. Only a big clay statue. A statue propped up by sticks. A clay thing, gilded. Rats gnawing at it. The wind shaking it. The sun cracking it. [*Pause*] And dead men, Philip. Dead men underneath it in the dust, fumbling at it to bring it down

PHILIP. Antistia.

ANTISTIA. Time brings all about, they say. You spoke of Sulla, Philip. I was a little girl then, when Marius and Sulla fought. My father was a centurion under Marius. I never told you that. What do you know of me, Philip, except that I'm to marry you? I was in the street outside our house, and some men came across the road. They patted my head and asked if my father was upstairs. I said yes, Philip. And they went in and brought him out. Out to the door in the sun. Some boys gathered to watch. I ran up to him, Philip, to show him my doll. And one of the men said, "We'll give you Marius." He was behind my father. He swung his arm right back like this, to give his sword a sweep. He knocked my dada down with a great hack on the neck, and they all stabbed him as he fell. One of the men said, "There's your dada, little girl; run and tell mother." And then one of the boys knelt down and stole his sandals, and another snatched my doll away. Time brings all about, Philip. All the lives spilt then by Pompey and Sulla. They are coming out of the night. Out of Spain. Out of Rome. Out of Asia. Souls have power, Philip, even in the darkness, when the time comes.

PHILIP [*awed*]. What time?

ANTISTIA. Pompey's time. There. There. It's beginning.

[*Noise of a tumult. The horns of Soldiers*]

PHILIP [*at window*]. Some of Rome seems to be burning. Pray God the Senate's safe. [*Pause*] We shall have to put off our marriage, Antistia.

ANTISTIA. Why, thus it is. We put off and put off till youth's gone, and strength's gone, and beauty's gone. Till two dry sticks mumble by the fire together, wondering what there was in life, when the sap ran.

PHILIP. I must be with my master, Antistia.

ANTISTIA. Your master. When you kiss the dry old hag, Philip, you'll remember these arms that lay wide on the bed, waiting, empty. Years. You'll remember this beauty. All this beauty. That would have borne you sons; but for your master. [*A noise of a lute off*] Your mistress too, perhaps. Here she comes. Here comes the young wife, that will have little joy of her man. She with her lute girl, twanging a march for her. Here she comes. Open the door.

PHILIP. Our mistress.

[*Enter*, CORNELIA *and* JULIA. *The* SERVANTS *place chairs for the ladies*]

CORNELIA. That will do, Antistia. Philip, you may go.

[*Exeunt* PHILIP *and* ANTISTIA]

JULIA. But tell me. What's going to happen? Is Cæsar really going to fight your husband, or is it only a feint to get your husband out of Rome?

CORNELIA. I don't know what to think, Julia. He's a danger. He's got such power with the mob. He's got this army in Gaul. Of course, that's a very great menace.

JULIA. But what are his plans? What does he want?

CORNELIA. He wants to rule Rome. He plans to be elected Consul. He is lying in Gaul there, thinking, I think, to frighten every one into electing him.

JULIA. I wish you could make your husband put down all this rioting.

[*Noise without*]

CORNELIA [*going to the window*]. I wish my father would come in, Julia, I'm anxious. What has the Senate decided? [*She walks up and down*]

JULIA. That Cæsar must dismiss his army. I don't think it's anything to make you anxious. How is your father? What does he think?

CORNELIA. He thinks that my husband ought to put Cæsar down with a strong hand.

A VOICE WITHOUT. Present arms.

CORNELIA. Who's that? Come in.

[*The door is shaken and opened violently*]

[*Enter her father*, METELLUS SCIPIO]

Father.

JULIA. We were just talking about you.

METELLUS. Where's your husband? Is he here? Has he been here?

CORNELIA. No, father. What is it?

METELLUS. Still at the House? He must have had my note. Has he sent round to you?

CORNELIA. No. What has happened?

METELLUS. I must talk to you, Cornelia.

JULIA [*rising*]. Good-bye, dear.

METELLUS. No. No, Cornelia. She mustn't go. You'll have to sleep here, my dear girl. The streets aren't safe to-night. Sit down. Please sit down. We're all in the same boat. [*Pause*] Cornelia. What's your husband going to do?

CORNELIA. Father. But I don't know. He tells me nothing. Nothing at least that is not common knowledge.

METELLUS. I've had letters. Cæsar's advancing into Italy. With all his army.

CORNELIA. To fight us? To attack Rome?

METELLUS. Yes. It's what I always feared. But I never thought the man would be such a blackguard.

CORNELIA. Does my husband know of this?

METELLUS. Yes. I sent word to him at the Senate to meet me here. I had to ride out to the camp. Cornelia. I don't understand your husband. My dear girl, he's been playing with the situation. I don't think you understand even now. It means that the whole of Rome is being handed over to a political brigand. All the governing classes, the religion of our fathers, all that has made Rome great. This cutthroat is marching to destroy it. Something happened at the camp.

CORNELIA. What, father?

METELLUS. The men. The soldiers. Roman soldiers. Men who had eaten the bread and salt. They refused duty. Romans. Bribed to that. By this upstart, Cæsar.

CORNELIA. They will stand and see Rome sacked by this outlaw.

METELLUS. I must see your husband. He's played with us. He must save us.

CORNELIA. There. There. He's coming. There's the sentry.

A VOICE WITHOUT. Attention. Eyes right.

METELLUS. Thank God.

A VOICE WITHOUT. Present arms.

CRIES. Hail! Pompey. Imperator.

[*A trumpet blows a flourish*]

A VOICE WITHOUT. Company. By the right. Quick. March.

[PHILIP *enters, opening doors wide, saluting, showing the fasces lining the door. Enter* POMPEY. *He carries a despatch box.* METELLUS *salutes*]

[*Exit* PHILIP. *Doors shut*]

POMPEY. Ah, Julia. Ah, Cornelia. [*He goes to her, and looks into her eyes*] Ah, beloved. [*Slowly*] There will be always peace for me, in that calm soul. [*Turning wearily*] I think that Sertorius was right, Julia.

JULIA. Why?

POMPEY. In our long Spanish wars, he planned to steal away to the Fortunate Islands. He could be quiet a little there. [*He goes to table dejectedly*]

METELLUS. You got my note?

POMPEY. Yes. Yes.

[*He sits like one stunned*]

METELLUS. Man. What are you going to do? Cæsar's marching on Rome with forty thousand men.

CORNELIA. But you can check him. You must.

METELLUS. Do you understand? The whole — Does the Senate know?

POMPEY [*opening his despatch box*]. Sit down, dear. [*To* CORNELIA] Sit down. The Senate knows. There were seven hundred of us in the Senate. Seven hundred of the best men in Rome, sitting there, at sunset, waiting. I had to stand up, among them. I had to tell them that one who — that a man whom I — a man very dear to me — was marching. With an army. Against this Rome. To destroy all that that great house, in generations of honour, has built up here, of virtue, of justice, of freedom, to the wonder of the world.

METELLUS. Yes. Go on. Go on.

CORNELIA. What are they going to do?

POMPEY. Many there were in the pay of — that man.

METELLUS. How did they take it?

POMPEY. They were silent. But a murmur ran through the house. They moved in their chairs. Even those most glad were awed. [*Pause*] Then Tullus, a man who owes his bread to me. He is in Cæsar's pay now. Rose up smiling. To ask me what troops I had for the defence of Rome.

METELLUS. Yes. And you, the guardian of Rome, what troops have you?

POMPEY. I said that with the two legions sent back from Gaul, and with those reserves called up from the country, I might have thirty thousand men.

METELLUS. What is all this talk of you might have? Those two legions are in Cæsar's pay. They're in mutiny at the camp. They're drawn up there. Ranged under the eagles. Their colonels are Cæsar's, body and soul. They refuse to move. As for your reserves, they're with the people. They're all for Cæsar. They came crowding out of their tents crying, Peace! Peace! They won't fight. You've mocked us. You've tricked us. You've betrayed Rome.

POMPEY. So they said in the Senate.

METELLUS. Why did you not prepare for this? You've had months in which to prepare?

POMPEY. I have prepared for it, Metellus. But I did not expect it. I thought that a noble act would be remembered, for more than twenty years. I thought that this Rome would be more to a man than a lust for power. And old friendship, I thought something.

METELLUS. I've no patience with you. [*He sits with twitching hands*] — [*Starting up*] Well. We know what you haven't done. At least tell us what you have done.

POMPEY. Yes. I'll tell you, Metellus. [*Pause*] When this began between us, I thought of my own time under Sulla. I'd carried the eagles into Africa. I was a young man, then. I did rash things. But I was lucky. I conquered Africa. Sulla sent word to me then to disband my army, and

return. [*To* Julia *and* Cornelia] [*Pause*] I resented Sulla's order. My soldiers resented it. They asked me to be their King in Africa. I obeyed Sulla. I thought — if I did — it might be easier — for the next young conqueror — to obey, too. Not to cause civil war.

Cornelia. He thought — we both thought, father, that Cæsar would remember that. We had planned how all our party, all the Senate even, should go out into the fields to welcome Cæsar. As Sulla welcomed my husband then. If he came home alone. Disbanding his army. That would have been a triumph for Cæsar greater than any Consulship. But Cæsar only thinks of present power. He would see the glory of Rome pass rather than not see that.

Pompey. I did not think that Cæsar would be blind to the glory of Rome [*going to the window*].

Metellus. I'll quote some other words to you. Something which you said once in Sicily. "What is all this talk of law," you said, "to us that have swords by our sides?" What? You remember those words? Will you sit still, and see Rome sacked? See the rabble make beastly all that seven centuries has made here? See their filthy hands laid — laid on these delicate ladies? See our temples spoiled that their rat-faced brats may grow up to eat free bread, and loaf and spit outside the beer-shops. Pah! What did the Senate say?

Pompey. They gave me absolute power here.

Metellus. What? Then send out your press. Bill every able-bodied man. Bill the women if the men won't come.

Pompey. No, Metellus. Not that.

Metellus. What then, man?

[Cornelia *interposes. Speaking to her husband*]

Cornelia. It is a question now, dear heart, of standing for the right. The right side is always the weaker side. War is terrible. It's such a loathsome kind of spiritual death. But it is better to have war, than to see law set aside. The will of Rome must not be slighted. I don't mean the popular cry. That is all for Cæsar now, dear. It was all for you once. It will be again. I mean all the burning thought of so many generations of our fathers. That must not be set aside for the lust of one man. It is the duty of a Roman, dear heart, to go out under the eagles to defend that burning thought, the Will of Rome. Even if he goes alone. And you will not go alone. The souls of our fathers will march with you. And if you die, dear one, defending what they died to make, you will die as I would have my lover die.

Pompey. Ah! Cornelia. You make death hard. But it would be sweet to die so for you. To die. To join that Senate of the old Romans; the wise ones. To bring them news of Rome there. In the shadows.

Cornelia. Saying that you come crowned. Having played the Roman. "Having obeyed their laws."

Metellus [*quickly*]. Go on, girl. Oh, move him, Cornelia. Goad him to action. I cannot. For Rome's sake. Move him. Get him out of this child's mood.

Pompey. Yes. Yes. Yes. [*Slowly*] I shall fight Cæsar. [*Sharply*]

Metellus. Ah! [*Excitedly*] But at once. Give him no time to win recruits by success. Give them no time here. The rabble don't hesitate. They don't understand a man who hesitates. Give me all the cavalry. Look. I'll mount six cohorts of slingers. I can worry him with those.

Pompey. Where's the map? [*He quickly takes map from wall*] It's the effect here, not the beating of Cæsar. We must stiffen the towns against him. Show them that they'll have to back their choice with their blood. That'll check his advance.

Metellus. Cæsar's quick, mind. He marches light, and he comes a devil of a pace. [*Musingly*]

Pompey. You say he's got forty thousand men? Let's see your despatch. Who sent it? [*Taking paper*] Can you trust this man?

Metellus. Yes. A clever young fellow.

Pompey. Young? Where's he served?

Metellus. He was on Crassus' staff in Parthia. In the smash.

Pompey. I don't trust ghosts.

Metellus. Ghosts?

Pompey. What escapes when an army's destroyed like Crassus'? [*Reading*] Forty thousand men. Shrewd. This is a shrewd lad, Metellus. He's read a lot of school-books, this man. Come. Forty thousand?

Metellus. Yes.

POMPEY. No. It's not possible, Metellus. This is politics. Not war. He's forcing our hand. His army's miles away. He's rushing the frontier with a few picked men. The pick of his light foot, and these light Gaulish lancers. It's a bold dash to put all Rome in a panic.

METELLUS [*biting his nails*]. That's not what you'd have done.

POMPEY. That's how I know I'm right. [*Standing*] Take the cavalry. Get into touch with him. Harass him. Hang on to him. Worry him all the time. I'll come on with all I can get.

METELLUS. Take the gladiators.

POMPEY. No. This is a Roman question. No paid slaves shall decide Rome's fate.

METELLUS. We shall be a desperate lot without them.

CORNELIA. The Navy. Land men from the ships.

METELLUS. They can't march. This campaign is a race.

POMPEY. No. No. Look. [*Excitedly*] I'll send gallopers to the fleet at Brindisi. I'll tell them to lash north, forced rowing. They'd catch him at Pisaurum. They could cut in on his left flank. So much for the attack. The city here's the problem.

METELLUS. Damn the city here. The city's for the winner. Always.

POMPEY [*musing*]. Cæsar's got an army in occupation here already. Now to secure Rome.

METELLUS [*quickly*]. The patricians. Let the patricians form a Committee of Public Safety. They'll settle Cæsar's mobs.

CORNELIA. No. No. There'd be massacre all over Rome. All frightened men are merciless.

METELLUS. Be quiet, girl. Yes, man.

POMPEY. No. That's the wild thing the desperate man always does to make his cause more desperate. It would madden the mob against us. Our task is to win the mob.

CORNELIA. Leave Cato in command here.

METELLUS. What?

CORNELIA. Let Cato raise a force purely to defend Rome. Not a party force at all.

POMPEY. Yes, Cato. He stands outside parties. He has power over both.

METELLUS. No, I say. Power? That man with power. Bah! He reminds every one of grandpapa. That's why he's popular.

POMPEY. It's popularity that's wanted.

METELLUS. It's power that's wanted. A few crucified mutineers. Not Cato telling us of good King Numa.

POMPEY [*picking up the hammer of his gong*]. We'll send for Cato.

METELLUS. No. No.

POMPEY. Yes.

METELLUS. Wait a minute.

POMPEY. Well?

METELLUS. We want a soldier here.

POMPEY. We want a man whom everybody can trust.

METELLUS. Cato's not firm enough.

POMPEY. I want Rome calm, not intimidated.

METELLUS. I'm not going to serve if that man's left behind in Rome.

POMPEY. Oh, don't say that. What are your reasons against Cato? In this instance.

METELLUS. How will Cato deal with the mutineers in camp?

POMPEY. Ah! There. [*Pause*] Yes. We can't be hard on those poor fellows. Try and see it as they see it. They've had the choice of refusing duty or beginning a civil war.

METELLUS. A soldier's first duty is obedience.

POMPEY. Is it? I'd rather have him a man first, myself. Only very good soldiers mutiny. Did you never notice that?

METELLUS. No. Nor you. They must be made examples of.

POMPEY [*smiling*]. Come. Some wine, Metellus.

METELLUS [*crossly*]. This isn't a time for wine. [*He stalks up and down the room*] Suppose we're beaten. I tell you if we're beaten you'll want more than old Father Cato here. You'll want a man to stamp out Cæsar's faction. I'd stop their smiling. By the time Cæsar stormed Rome he'd find few of his friends left. I'd make Rome so sick with blood. By. She'd think no more of Cæsar.

POMPEY. My God! The streets ran blood. In Sulla's time. That once. The carts drove over them.

METELLUS. That was child's play to what this will be.

POMPEY. Yes. Suppose we're beaten. Rome stormed. No, no, never! [*He flings the map aside*] No.

I'll give up Italy rather. I will not fight in Italy. Cæsar's rabble shall have no excuse for sacking Rome.

METELLUS. What? [*A pause*] Where will you fight him then? In Spain, where your army is?

CORNELIA. Not in Spain.

METELLUS. Why not in Spain?

POMPEY. No. You know the proverb. Spain's a country where a big army starves and a little army gets beaten. I know, I've fought there. And it's far from Rome, and too near Gaul. No, Macedonia. We'll go over with the fleet to Macedonia. There are five good legions from Crassus' smash in Macedonia. We'll prepare an army there.

METELLUS. Yes. But your friends in Rome. Our party here? The Senate? The Consuls?

POMPEY. They must come with us at once to Brindisi, where the fleet lies. We'll take ship there. [*Writing*] I'm writing to Domitius at Corfinium, to join me instantly with his twenty cohorts. [*Musing*] I wonder. If he stays, he will be invested. And he will stay, he's as obstinate as a mule. If he marches south at once we shall have twenty thousand. If not, we must leave him to his fate. I must abandon Italy.

METELLUS [*slowly*]. There's something in it. Yes. I wonder.

POMPEY. It's not so risky. Fighting now is backing losing cards.

METELLUS. We shall lose friends.

POMPEY. We shall gain time.

METELLUS. Let's see the map. [*He takes another map*] I like it. Yes. It's a good move.

POMPEY. Cæsar will attack my army in Spain, first.

METELLUS. Afraid of its invading his dear Gaul, you mean?

POMPEY. He'll have no choice in the matter. He's got no ships to follow us. I've got the Navy. While he's building ships, I'll build an Army. If he fights my generals in Spain, it will be a year before he can follow me. We shall have a great army by that time.

METELLUS. Yes. An army, eh? Macedonian phalanx, eh? We'll send out a fiery sign through Macedonia. All the swordsmen of the hills will come. Out of Dacia, out of Thrace. Jove, what an army! With Egypt at your back, too.

POMPEY. Yes. Egypt's full of my old soldiers. We can always fall back on King Ptolemy. [*He becomes sad*] Ah, well. Ah, well.

CORNELIA. What is it?

POMPEY [*quickly*]. Nothing. [*He rises*] I was thinking of all this kingliness wandering in little wild Greek towns.

CORNELIA. The kingly mind always lives in a kingly city.

POMPEY [*eagerly*]. Ah! Who said that?

CORNELIA. You said it.

POMPEY. Ah. Where's the fire that scatters those sparks? Why doesn't it burn in us always?

METELLUS [*excitedly*]. It's burning now. Look here. Listen. Look here. Your idea of Macedonia. Splendid! Cæsar won't follow. [*Slapping the table*] He'll be afraid. Part the world between you. Let Cæsar keep the West. You be King in the East. Build up another Rome in Athens. With you in the East, we could do what Alexander did. We could ——

POMPEY. No more ambitions, Metellus. You see where ambition leads.

METELLUS [*flushed*]. You wait till you see those Dacians. Big, black, clean-limbed fellows, Julia, with swords and steel shields. They charge like cavalry. [*He fills wine*]

POMPEY. So, Macedonia.

METELLUS. Yes, Macedonia.

CORNELIA. When?

POMPEY. Now, dear.

CORNELIA. To-night?

POMPEY. It doesn't give you much time. It will be hard for you to leave all your pretty things behind.

CORNELIA. I was thinking about your night's rest. Life is book and picture to me. All that is Rome to us comes with us.

METELLUS. Well then [*rolling up the map with a click*], boot and saddle.

POMPEY. Take what men you have, Metellus. And press post horses. You'll want my orders though.

[*He strikes the gong*]

[*Enter* PHILIP]

PHILIP. Sir.

POMPEY. Ask Theophanes to speak to me a moment. [*Exit* PHILIP]

METELLUS. That Greek writer-fellow. I don't know how you stand that man.

[*Enter* Theophanes, *who bows and is saluted*]

Pompey. Sit down. [*He takes papers from despatch box*] We're going to Macedonia. We take ship at Brindisi. These orders to our party. Have them filled in and sent round.

Theophanes. Yes. But you won't want them.

Pompey. You mean that — What do you mean?

Theophanes. I mean, you won't want them. Cæsar's at Cremona. He's not marching on Rome. He's encamped in his own province. It was a false alarm.

All. What?

Pompey. How do you know that?

Theophanes. Labienus has just come in. Cæsar's right-hand man. I've been talking to him. Cæsar's sending messengers with new proposals to you. He's not marching on Rome.

Metellus. So we go on again.

Pompey. What are the new proposals? Does he know?

Theophanes [*shrugging his shoulders*]. His men are beginning to shrink, I suppose, now that it comes to the touch. I don't blame 'em.

Julia. Do you think it's an excuse to gain time?

Cornelia. Ah, no, Julia. Let us give Cæsar credit for a little nobleness.

Metellus. Pah! He was in Catiline's conspiracy. It was proved beyond a doubt. Well, Pompey. What are you going to do?

Pompey. It is very wonderful. I must see Cato. [*Going*]

Metellus. The lath and plaster Spartan. Why?

Theophanes. He's here.

[Cato, *in black robes, enters. He stands with arms folded, looking at them all*]

Metellus. Well, sir?

Pompey. Yes, Cato?

Cornelia. You've heard? Won't you sit down?

Cato. So this is the family party. Well, Pompey. Now I see the drags that hinder your honesty. [*To* Julia] You. The critic. You with neither art nor brain. Thinking you show both by condemning them in others.

Julia. Do you show art and brain by condemning me?

Cato. Look into your heart, woman. [*To* Metellus] You, sir. The General. A tailor and a love affair made you a General. Not war. War doesn't make your kind. But you long for war. You would shriek your country into war, any day, sir. So that humble brave men might make pickings for you. Invitations. Gold. What you call love affairs. Fame. [*To* Theophanes, *while* Metellus *looks him up and down*] I don't know you, sir.

Theophanes. A contributor to Time's waste-paper basket.

Cato. Ah! [*To* Pompey] And you, the mischief-maker, the genius. Well, which of us was right, Pompey?

Pompey. You were right. But I have acted more friendly than Cæsar.

Cato. You have made the mischief. Can you unmake it?

Pompey. Can you unmake it?

Cato. I? I am going into Sicily. You forget. I am Governor there.

Cornelia. But now. In this moment of truce. Surely it can be remedied?

Cato. Yes. At a price.

Pompey. How?

Cato. You must go alone, on foot, to Cæsar.

Pompey. Never.

Cato. And tell him that you come to save Rome from civil war. That a man's pride is a little thing to that. And that so you have put by your greatness.

Cornelia. Ah! Ah!

[*She watches* Pompey's *face. All turn to* Pompey]

Pompey. No. I have been a King here. I have been like God here. Kings have come to me on their knees. Cæsar. Cæsar's. I made Cæsar by a stroke of my pen. No. Ah, no.

Cato. Cæsar would be shamed to tears, Pompey. Would not that victory content you?

Pompey. I cannot. No, I cannot.

Cato. Not to save Rome, Pompey?

Pompey. No. I should be a mock. No. No.

Cornelia. You would be a fire, Pompey, for all time. All the lamps of the world would be kindled at that nobleness.

Pompey. You wish it, too, dear heart?

Cornelia [*softly*]. I wish it.

Pompey [*looking round*]. To a young

man. Whom I have made. Oh, Cato, Cato! Is kindness to a friend only a bitter form of suicide? [*He fumbles at the clasp of his purple*] Very well, I will go, Marcus.

[*He slings his purple aside*]

CATO. I thought you were Pompey the Little. I wronged you.

METELLUS. [*To* THEOPHANES] So.

[*They exchange glances*]

POMPEY. Old man. Old man.

[*A noise without. Cries. A sentry calls "Halt." Struggling. Shouts of "Stand back." "Let me in." The spears rattle. The door is shaken*]

THEOPHANES [*opening door*]. What's this? [*Pause*] Let him in, Sentry.

[*Enter filthy* HORSEMAN, *dust to the eyes, tottering. The door is left open, showing* SOLDIERS]

METELLUS. One of Cæsar's lancers.

THEOPHANES. A deserter, eh?

THE MAN [*gasping*]. Which of you is the lord?

POMPEY [*pouring wine for him*]. I am he. Drink this. Take your time. What is it?

THE MAN [*spilling his drink like a man half dead of thirst*]. Cæsar! Cæsar! I escaped last night. Cæsar!

CORNELIA. What?

THE MAN. He's crossed the Rubicon. With all his army. Marching on Rome. Be here in two days.

[*A pause*]

POMPEY [*resuming his purple*]. That settles it. There can be no treaty now.

CORNELIA. So war has begun.

POMPEY [*sadly*]. There it is. Only it is more terrible now. More terrible than it was. [*Turning to go*] It must be war now to the end.

METELLUS [*picking up the orders from the table and slapping them to command attention*]. And now. To Brindisi. [*He walks briskly towards the door, but halts opposite* CATO, *at whom he glares.* POMPEY *and* CORNELIA *halt to watch him*] Well, sir. My Conscript Father. Will you crawl before Cæsar now, sir? It is long since a Roman bade his King to lick the dust before a traitor. You and your kind may sue to such. Rome puts other thoughts into our hearts.

CATO. There are two Romes, Metellus. One built of brick by hodsmen. But the Rome I serve glimmers in the uplifted heart. It is a court for the calm gods. That Rome. Let me not shame that city. Advance the eagles.

A VOICE WITHOUT. Present arms.

[*A trumpet blows a blast*]

[*Curtain*]

ACT II

SCENE FIRST. — *Staff-officer's tent at Durazzo. Walls of plain canvas. Canvas door running on rings at back. Smaller canvas door at back. Table and camp-chairs. Everything bare and severe.* DOMITIUS, LENTULUS, THEOPHANES, *at the table.*

DOMITIUS. So it goes on. And Spain is lost. Look at this position here. Cæsar has shut us in here like so many sheep in a pen. Has Pompey no pride? Or has he grown besotted?

THEOPHANES. Flaccus is raiding Cæsar's lines this morning. He will attack them in three places. And break them.

DOMITIUS [*fiercely*]. Flaccus is a boy. A whole year wasted, and half the empire lost.

[*Enter* POMPEY *hurriedly. They salute*]

POMPEY. Good morning. I have called you all together to tell you of the loss of my Spanish army, lately commanded by Afranius. We had expected victory, from Afranius' letters. But we are soldiers. We know what Fortune is in war. We are not merchants, to cast him for failing.

DOMITIUS. We have given up Italy, and thrown away Spain. Africa is invaded and Sicily taken. We have given up and drawn back everywhere. And why? That we might come here to be cooped up by an army half our size. I want to know why? We all want to know why.

POMPEY. I remember Sulla saying that he could make an army love him by talking to the privates occasionally. But that no amount of talking would make his generals love his ideas. Be content. And bide my time.

LENTULUS. Magnus. I am not given to criticism; but this biding time is ruin. We are losing allies; we are losing Rome. Rome looked to you to crush this upstart. Instead of that you

have let a rebellion grow into a civil war. You have watched your adherents stamped out piecemeal. You have done nothing.

POMPEY. Wait.

DOMITIUS. We have waited for a year.

POMPEY. I ask you to wait a little longer.

LENTULUS. Magnus, while we wait, the rabble is stamping out aristocracy throughout the world. [*He rises*]

POMPEY. Sit down, Lentulus. I tell you to wait. The war is in my hands.

DOMITIUS. War is in the hands of the man who strikes. [*He thrusts aside the lesser door*] There. Among the crags there. By the pine-clump. In that great red heap like an iron mine. That is Cæsar's camp. I've been out there night after night, worming over rocks and down gullies, keeping my course by the stars, so that, when a chance came, I could take an army into that camp blindfold. I've a map here. [*Throws down a paper*] Those red dots are the sentries. Each dot was made at the risk of my heart's blood. I've grovelled in the earth before all those sentries, praying for the moon to go in, while they talked of their love-affairs. I've seen the sergeant coming his rounds with a lantern, and shut my eyes lest they should gleam, and betray me. I could take that camp with two legions in the blackest night of the year. This war is breaking the world in two. And you send Flaccus with a corporal's guard to pull down a hundred yards of paling. Justify that, before you tell me to wait.

POMPEY. Flaccus is fighting the decisive battle of the war.

LENTULUS. This is trifling.

[*He rises and moves away*]

DOMITIUS. The decisive. I will tell you what a decisive battle is. I took part in one for you at Massilia three months ago. At the end of that siege, there was no city. There were no people. Only some deathsheads dying of plague, and a few madmen on the walls. And outside, there were towers flinging fires at us, and slings flinging rocks at us, and miles of army coming up to the sack. That was a decisive battle.

POMPEY. Domitius, when a man thinks fixedly of anything, desiring it with his whole nature, he creates a strong pitiless devil.

Domitius, you are given up to a devil. A devil of lust for battle. You are fiercer than a devil, for when there is no enemy you fight your friends, and when there are no friends you fight yourself. And when you have torn yourself bloody you fight ideas, not because you understand them, and hate them, but because when you are not fighting you are nothing. I fear you, Domitius. A man's friends are those who understand his ideas, and advance them. You are Cæsar's friend, Domitius.

DOMITIUS [*intensely*]. You killed my brother, when you were a young man. For that, I swore to tear your heart out. You dined with me once, twenty years ago. You will not remember. I put my hand upon your shoulder. I had a knife in my other hand. I could have stabbed you to the heart. And there you would have died, Magnus, before my old Marian friends. But I saw that you were a better man than my brother. Something you said. I saw that you were what Rome wanted. [*Pause*]

[*Fiercely*] You know better than to call me Cæsar's friend. I've made Cæsar rock in his seat.

POMPEY. You are Cæsar's friend. Your heart beats pulse for pulse with Cæsar's heart. You malign me because my hands are not red from butchery like his. And at this moment, while you malign me, Flaccus is ending the war. Take no more thought of the war. The war is over.

[*The* GENERALS *draw to one side and talk apart for a moment*]

POMPEY. Rome is the problem now. You would do well to think of Rome. This is the seventh democratic rising since my boyhood. Seven desperate attempts to change in fifty years. Does that teach you nothing?

LENTULUS. Theophanes.

DOMITIUS. Yes.

THEOPHANES. Magnus.

POMPEY. I offered a broken and distracted Italy. He took it. A turbulent, useless Spain. He took it. I have flung down half a useless world, and he has gorged it and come on into the trap. I am camped in plenty, with six fleets ruling the seas. Cæsar is trenched in mud, living on roots. Besieging me, you call it? He has dug thirty miles of works. He has not enough men to guard ten miles. His men are exhausted and starving. He

stays in those works during my pleasure; no longer. He cannot force me to battle. He cannot raid my lines. He cannot go back to Rome.

And I, with one slight thrust, am tumbling him into ruin.

[*Enter an* ORDERLY *with a despatch. He gives it to* POMPEY]

LENTULUS. From Flaccus?

DOMITIUS. You are of the Fifth?

ORDERLY. From Titus Pulcio, my lord.

POMPEY. Very well.

ORDERLY. Have you any orders, my lord?

POMPEY. No orders. Acknowledge. [*Exit* ORDERLY, *saluting*]

THEOPHANES. Is it important?

POMPEY. Read it.

THEOPHANES [*reading*]. From Titus Pulcio, legate, fifth legion, to Headquarters: "The attack under Valerius Flaccus has been repulsed with heavy loss. The survivors have fallen back upon the old works, south of the river, where desperate fighting is now going on. I am marching with what I have. The enemy is in force. Stragglers report position hopeless."

DOMITIUS. These thrusting youths want a lesson. Now, Magnus. Justify your plan, now.

POMPEY. Wait.

LENTULUS. Wait? While our right flank is being rolled up? [*Coldly*]

POMPEY. It would take Cæsar two days to bring up enough troops to crush our right.

DOMITIUS. Surely you will smash this attacking force.

POMPEY. I am fighting with the thought of Rome before me. I will not march back to Rome over corpses, in the Sulla fashion.

DOMITIUS. At least you will march back over those whom we took last night. I killed those.

POMPEY. You killed those men?

DOMITIUS. They were rebels, I tell you. Traitors.

POMPEY. I will judge traitors.

DOMITIUS. They were my own deserters. Dogs. I will serve all traitors so. And I tell you this.

POMPEY. Not a word. You disgrace our cause, Domitius. [*Pause, and change of voice*] I may win this war. Or this [*showing his gold eagle-clasp*] may pay a camp-trull yonder. But whether I win or go down, my men shall bear themselves nobly. Those on my side must act like knights of the bodyguard of God. See to it.

[*Enter* CHIEF CENTURION COTTA, *battered*]

COTTA. I report the death of commander Flaccus, my lord.

POMPEY. Killed?

COTTA. Yes, my lord.

DOMITIUS. That is what happens in skirmishing. Nothing is done, and the good man gets killed.

COTTA. We were beaten back, my lord; the surprise failed.

POMPEY. Yes? Well?

COTTA. We rushed their wall, tore up their palisades, and set fire to two of the turrets. Then they surrounded us. I should think they had two legions on to us. We had to cut our way home.

POMPEY. And your commander?

COTTA. He was killed in the thick, my lord. After our storm, we were driven back on to the palisades. The pales were all on fire, all along the line, burning hard. I looked one minute, and saw him backed right up against the flames, with a dozen Thracians. They had a whole troop of lancers stabbing at them. I got within a few paces of him, trying to bring him off, but the fire balls burst so thick one couldn't see. My men were being cut to pieces, the cavalry was cutting in on our rear, and there came a rush of spearmen which swept me off the rampart. I saw his body falling back into the fire, all lit up. But we could never get near the place again. They cut us to pieces down on the flat. They killed eight hundred of us.

LENTULUS. A severe repulse.

DOMITIUS. Wasted. Wasted lives. Utterly useless, wicked waste.

POMPEY. And then? What happened then?

COTTA. They drove us back into the old works by the river. Over the outer wall into the ditch. [*Pause*] We were penned up in the ditch like beasts in a slaughter-house. They swarmed up above us on the wall, pelting us. We were below them, grinding in the mud, huddled like sheep. Men will always huddle when they have no room to use their shields. It was so fierce, that I thought our men would break. But we

could not break. We were shut in. We were so pushed together that the dead could not fall. And being pressed man to man gave us a kind of courage. I got up on a heap where the wall had fallen. I wanted to see. I could see all a wave of red plumes where Cæsar's Gauls were pressing up, calling to their horses. Arr. Arr. There was a roar everywhere like ice breaking up in the spring. Behind their main attack they were making a way through the wall for their horse. Every now and then their picks flashed and the earth came scattering down. It was worst at the gate. The noise of the axes on the gate was like a ship-yard. They brought up a tree to batter it, and every time they ran at it, you could see the wood give, in great splinters. I thought we were lost; but it was our fight, my lord.

For I heard fifes, playing "The Day of Zama", and men singing. It was a cohort of the fifth, marching to support our left flank. They came on slowly, in line, with their heads up, and the fifes playing. The centurions led them, singing, marching well ahead. It was a fine thing to see those men coming on. Their ranks were so locked that the oak-trees on their shields made a green breastwork across their front. It was our fight after that. We caught them in the outer ditch. The ditch is choked with them. Cæsar lost a full thousand there in the ditch. They were broken. We shook them to the heart. They will not face us again, my lord, for a long time. Nor any enemy. Cæsar will have trouble with them.

POMPEY. Very well, Cotta.

COTTA. They are sending in the body with a trumpet, my lord.

POMPEY. Yes! Send me the returns of killed and wounded and the centurions' reports. Your legion will stand no watch to-night. See that your men rest. Order wine from the sutlers for them. I will speak to them to-night.

COTTA. Thank you, my lord.

[*He goes out, saluting*]

DOMITIUS. One moment, Cotta.

[*He goes out, after him*]

THEOPHANES. Cæsar is sending a trumpet. Can he be suing for peace?

LENTULUS. Why should he sue for peace after a skirmish?

POMPEY. It was the pricking of a bubble. He is suing for peace. And if I grant peace, I shall have these to fight. And if I refuse peace, this ruin will go on.

THEOPHANES. Do we receive this trumpet?

[*Enter* DOMITIUS]

DOMITIUS. Magnus. Cæsar is in disorder. His men are leaving the trenches. He is withdrawing. His south walls are abandoned already.

POMPEY. Yes. He has learned his lesson.

He must pay them now for the life they have spent for him. He cannot pay them. The most that he can do is to save them from the result of his insanity.

THEOPHANES. He can retreat.

POMPEY. How can he retreat? He cannot retreat. Where can he go? My navies hold the sea. To the north there are savage tribes. The south is blocked by my garrisons. I am here in the west with my army. And to the east lies Metellus, with another army.

He has one chance of saving them. He can sue for peace.

DOMITIUS. You are not going to receive this herald?

POMPEY. Yes. Rome must have peace.

If Cæsar will make submission —

DOMITIUS. A surrender will be useless.

THEOPHANES. Cæsar must be destroyed.

LENTULUS. How will you settle Rome, with Cæsar alive?

POMPEY. This war has gone on all my life. Sulla's method failed. Catiline's method failed. They shall not be tried again. Rome shall be settled this time finally.

DOMITIUS. If you hesitate to strike now, you are a traitor, Magnus.

POMPEY. I have made my plan.

[*Sternly*] I will abide by it. To your place. Murmur no more.

No little gust of passion shall set me wavering.

[*A* VOICE *without and a trumpet*]

VOICE. Present arms. Port arms. Pass friend. Present arms.

POMPEY. Life is nothing. It is the way of life which is so much. Enter there.

COTTA [*entering*]. The body, my lord. With the trumpet.

[*Enter* Bearers *with the body of* Valerius Flaccus. Cotta, *and the others salute the corpse. Then, with a solemnity of trumpets blowing points of ceremony,* Marcus Acilius *enters, led by two* Centurions. *He is blindfolded.* Cotta, *the* Bearers *and the* Centurions *go out, when the handkerchief is removed*]

Acilius. I bring back your soldier, Cneius Pompey.

Pompey. You bring a message?

Acilius. I come from Cæsar.

Pompey. Well?

Acilius. He asks you to end this war. The gods have given you an equal measure of victory. You have both lost and won half the Roman world. Now that the world is shared between you, you can consent to a peace. To-morrow, if fortune favour one of you, the fortunate one will think himself too great to parley. [*Pause*] Cæsar asks that a peace may be concluded. If you will undertake to do the same, he will make public oath to disband his army within three days. That is his proposal.

Pompey. More than a year ago, the Senate ordered Cæsar to disband his troops. That decree still stands disregarded. I cannot treat with a rebel. Cæsar must obey that decree and submit to the Senate's mercy.

Acilius. The quarrel is between you and Cæsar, Magnus.

Pompey. Not at all. I represent the Senate.

Acilius. Your party of the Senate, which my party does not recognise.

Pompey. These are the facts, Acilius. Cæsar has attacked Republican rule. He has failed. I make it a condition of treaty that he acknowledge Republican authority.

Acilius. Cæsar has never denied that authority. He is in arms against a perversion of that authority by unscrupulous men. That he seeks to end the Republic is denied by my presence here, asking for peace. Cæsar is no suitor to you. That great mind is its own sufficient authority. Farewell, Magnus. [*Going*]

[*At door*] You will grant peace if Cæsar kneels in the dust. Very well. Rome is more to him than honour. He will kneel in the dust. In the most public place in Rome. He will submit himself, body and cause, to the judgment of the Roman people there assembled.

Will that suffice?

Pompey. No.

The mob has no voice in this matter. The mob must be taught to obey its rulers. Cæsar must submit to the Senate.

Acilius. Then the blood will be on your hands, Magnus. [*Going*]

Pompey. It will suffice if Cæsar surrender to myself in the presence of both armies. But a public act of submission must be made. Otherwise it will be thought that Cæsar drove us from Italy, and forced us to accept his terms. That I cannot allow.

Acilius. I am to tell Cæsar that you refuse. [*Quietly*] From fear of what the world may think?

Pompey. You count that a little thing, the thought of the world? For what else are we fighting; but to control the thought of the world? What else matters, Acilius?

You think that I am fighting to be a master? Not so. I am fighting because I know what Cæsar wants. I have watched his career step by step. Cæsar means to be king. He has bribed the rabble to crown him.

You see only the brilliant man, winning — what he has the power to win. I look beyond that man. I see Rome under a secret, bloody domination and a prey to future Cæsars. That shall not be.

I am an old man, now, Acilius. I have been fighting this battle all my life. I hope now to end it. You have heard my terms. [*He strikes a gong*]

[*A pause. Enter a* Centurion]

Do you accept them or refuse them? Take your time.

[*Pause*]

Acilius. I refuse them.

Pompey. [*To* Centurion] You will take the Gemella legion, drive in Cæsar's outposts and burn the works.

[*Exit* Centurion]

Acilius. There is no voice for peace, then. I have failed. Now that my task is done, may I speak with you privately?

Pompey. Yes. On a private matter. Is your business private?

Acilius. Yes. It is private.

Pompey. [*To* Generals]. Leave us.

[*Exit* Generals]

[*To* Acilius] Be brief.

Acilius. My mother married you. Years ago. She was dragged by force from my father so that you might be propped by a vote the more. She died of a broken heart, in your bed.

You have taken worse props, now. These nobles. They are using you to stamp out democracy. So that they may plunder in peace for another fifty years.

And when you have done their task. When the war is over.

Pompey [*taking up gong*]. I cannot listen to this.

Acilius. You plan to make just those democratic reforms for which Cæsar is fighting. You mean to cripple the aristocracy. And they will stop you. Domitius hates you. Metellus fears you. Lentulus is jealous of you. They are planning to get rid of you. Even now. [*Pause*]

Get rid of them, Magnus. Take Cæsar as your friend. End the war. Drive them out.

Pompey. And after?

Acilius. You could make Rome what you please.

[Pompey *strikes the gong*]

[*Re-enter* Generals]

Pompey. And after? [*Pause*] Your party shall submit to mine. [*He writes a few words*] You may take this to Cæsar. [*Gives writing*]

Give this man safe conduct.

Acilius. I am going, Magnus. I shall not see you again.

[Theophanes *goes out*]

Pompey [*who has turned away*]. Well?

Acilius. Pride is a mean thing in the presence of death. To-day you are great, and the kings bring tribute to you. To-morrow you may be this. Only this. Praised by the worm.

[*Showing corpse*]

Pompey. You talk of the presence of death. Man, I am in the presence of life, and death's a pleasure to it.

[Cotta *and* Centurions *enter with* Theophanes. *They salute*]

Who cares what I may be? I may be carrion. But while I am man, and carry a faith in me, I will guard that faith. See this man through the lines.

[*With a solemn blowing of a point of ceremony,* Cotta *and the* Centurions *go out, leading* Acilius, *blindfolded. Murmurs. Acclamations*]

[*The* Generals *eye* Pompey. *He walks to the body and looks at it*]

Pompey. Poor boy. You have gone a long way from this inn.

When you were born, women kissed you, and watched you as you slept, and prayed for you, as women do. When you learned to speak, they praised you; they laughed and were so tender with you, even when they were in pain. And to-night you will wander alone, where no woman's love can come to you, and no voice speak to you, and no grief of ours touch you to an answer.

The dead must be very lonely.

Domitius [*coming forward and looking at the body*]. That? Why be sad at that? He was marked for it. [*Quietly*] Magnus. I have something to say. I give you full credit for what you have done. You were right. But not so right as I would have been. Destruction's what war's for. Still. It has happened. Now there is Rome. How are you going back to Rome without the moral support of a victory?

Lentulus. In Rome, it is said openly that you have been shuffled about at Cæsar's will.

Theophanes. And that we have been beaten in every battle.

Pompey. What is that noise, there?

[*Cries of "Victory." Clapping. Trumpets. A cry of "Present Arms." The spears rattle*]

[*Enter* Lucius Lucceius, *in the civil dress*]

Lentulus. Lucceius.

Theophanes. Lucius Lucceius.

[Lucceius *stands looking at them silently. He salutes the body, and advances slowly*]

Lucceius [*slowly*]. I salute you, Cneius Pompey. I come from Rome.

Pompey. What news do you bring from Rome?

Lucceius. News of your triumph, Magnus.

Cæsar's army, under Curio, invaded Africa.

Curio is killed. His army is destroyed. Africa is saved to us.

[*He takes a laurel wreath*]

The Roman people send me with this wreath, Magnus.

[*He offers it, with reverent dignity*]

POMPEY [*taking the wreath and laying it on* FLACCUS' *head*]. Once, long ago, I played with you. By the fish-pools at Capua, watching the gold-fish.

You asked me for my purple, that glittering day long ago. [*He lays his purple over* FLACCUS] All things for which men ask are granted. A word may be a star or a spear for all time. This is the day of my triumph, it seems.

[*A distant trumpet winds. It winds again*]

THEOPHANES. There is a horn blowing.

POMPEY. It is blowing like a death-horn.

DOMITIUS. It is a Roman call.

In Cæsar's camp.

[DOMITIUS *flings aside the canvas*]

It is the "Prepare to March." He is in retreat. His huts are burning. They are winding out upon the road there. They are floundering up the pass. Two thousand horse could ruin them.

POMPEY. Ruin is not my province. Let them destroy themselves. They are wandering out into the wilds without heart, without hope, without plan. That is the forlornest march ever called by trumpets. There is death in every heart there already. Well. We shall follow.

Call the chief centurions.

[THEOPHANES *goes to the door, to the* SENTRY *without*]

[*Going to the body*] And to-night we shall be marching from this poor earth, pursuing Cæsar, marching to many trumpets, under the stars, singing as we march. I shall end Sulla's war, now. But we will kill the rebellion, remember, not those Romans.

[*The* CHIEF CENTURIONS *enter*]

A trumpeter there. Strike camp. Prepare to march.

[*A* CENTURION *going out, calls*]

Take up the body.

1ST CENTURION.

Man is a sacred city, built of marvellous earth.

2ND CENTURION.

Life was lived nobly here to give this body birth.

3RD CENTURION.

Something was in this brain and in this eager hand.

4TH CENTURION.

Death is so dumb and blind, Death cannot understand.

[*They lift the bier*]

Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limbs' glory.

Death makes women a dream and men a traveller's story,

Death drives the lovely soul to wander under the sky,

Death opens unknown doors. It is most grand to die.

[*They go out, followed by* POMPEY]

[*Now without comes a shaking blast from a trumpet. It is taken up and echoed by many trumpets, near and far, blowing the legionary calls, till the air rings*]

[*Curtain*]

SCENE SECOND. — *The same. Taper light. Dawn later.* POMPEY *writing. Enter* LUCCEIUS]

LUCCEIUS. Not in bed, Magnus?

POMPEY. I have had evil dreams.

Are you from Rounds?

Is all quiet?

LUCCEIUS. Yes.

There is a light near Cæsar's camp. They are burning their dead.

Our scouts took two lancers. They say that Cæsar's men are dying. Of fever and hunger.

POMPEY. Yes. He must surrender within a few days. And so they are burning their dead?

LUCCEIUS. Yes.

POMPEY. Now we have Rome to settle. [*Pause*]

I lie awake, thinking.

What are we, Lucceius?

LUCCEIUS. Who knows? Dust with a tragic purpose. Then an end.

POMPEY. No. But what moves us?

I saw a madman in Egypt. He was eyeless with staring at the sun. He said that ideas come out of the East, like locusts. They settle on the nations and give them life; and then pass on, dying, to the wilds, to end in some scratch on a bone, by a cave-man's fire.

I have been thinking that he was wise, perhaps. Some new swarm of ideas has been settling on Rome. A new kind of life is being born. A new spirit. I thought a year ago that it was crying out for the return of kings, and personal rule. I see now that it is only crying out for a tyrant to sweep the old life away.

Rome has changed, Lucceius. Outwardly, she is the same, still. A city

which gives prizes to a few great people. A booth where the rabble can sell their souls for bread, and their bodies for the chance of plunder. Inwardly, she is a great democratic power struggling with obsolete laws.

Rome must be settled. The crowd must have more power.

LUCCEIUS [*surprised*]. That would be a denial of your whole life, Magnus.

You have been crushing democracy for forty years.

POMPEY. I have crushed rebellions. I mean now to crush their cause.

There must be a change. A great change.

[*Enter* METELLUS, DOMITIUS, LENTULUS]

LUCCEIUS [*giving paper*]. This is my report. [*He salutes and goes. At the door he pauses, looking out*] The pyre is still burning. They must be dying like flies. [*Exit*]

METELLUS [*as the* GENERALS *sit facing* POMPEY]. Cæsar has sent to me privately, Magnus, to beg me to ask terms from you. I sent back his letter without comment.

The war is over; but we are not yet secure. We shall have to garrison the provinces for some years with men whom we can trust.

Spain and Gaul are arranged for among ourselves. It is the lesser appointments. Magnus, I want your voice, on behalf of Lucius Tuditanus. I was thinking of sending him as my deputy into Asia.

POMPEY. Is that the soldier Tuditanus, who did so well under you? [*To* DOMITIUS]

DOMITIUS. No. His nephew.

METELLUS. He's a young man on my personal staff.

POMPEY. Has he qualified for the prætorship?

METELLUS. No. Not in the strict legal sense. But he was of the greatest use to me in Asia. He would be competent.

POMPEY. In what way was he of use to you?

METELLUS. In the collection of tribute, when they disputed our assessments. They hoped to wrangle in Court, without paying, till Cæsar saved them. Tuditanus stopped that. He judged the claims on the spot, and the tax was paid, or distrained, there and then. Often the patrols did not have to unsaddle. And as we needed the money quickly, the system was of great use to me.

POMPEY. Yes. But the law is plain, Metellus. A prætor and a prætor's deputy represent Rome. It is a responsible office. They judge and govern in Rome's name. Men must be trained for it. What has Tuditanus done, besides this tax-collection, that the laws should be broken for him?

LENTULUS. His father has made many sacrifices for us.

POMPEY. There is a growing belief in Rome that a sacrifice should be a good investment. Anything else?

METELLUS. He is one of those brilliant young men, of proved loyalty, for whom we ought to provide. I recommend him to you.

POMPEY. That is much in his favour. But I want proof that he can govern. Tell me, Metellus. Where has he shown administrative talent?

METELLUS. He has not shown it. He is a man whom we ought to bind to us. He would soon learn. We could give him a staff of old soldiers, to steady him, at first.

POMPEY. Has he any power of command? Where has he served?

DOMITIUS. He was in the horse for a time, in Lycia.

POMPEY. [*To* METELLUS] What recommended him to you?

METELLUS. Never mind the merit. I am contending for the principle, that our friends must be rewarded.

POMPEY. Yes. But prætorian power. No. He must qualify.

LENTULUS. Before you reject him, will you not see him? Metellus and Domitius would not recommend him without grave reason. I might say, without urgent reason.

POMPEY. I want an imperative reason. Without that, it would be a gross act of favouritism. And illegal. As for the results, we have seen such prætors. We should have a rising, and possibly a frontier war. No. Tuditanus cannot be prætor.

METELLUS. Remember, Magnus. Tuditanus is one of many. Others are in the same position. With a right to expect employment.

POMPEY. Peace will try their quality.

There are men with Cæsar with a right to expect employment.

[*The* GENERALS *look at each other and sigh*]

DOMITIUS. There is another point. We are going back to Rome. Rome is in a rebellious, unsettled state. We must secure ourselves.

I ask that every man of any standing in Rome be brought to trial, even if he have remained neutral. If the rebels have attacked authority, the neutrals have ignored it. And both must suffer. Rebellion must be stamped out.

[*Gives paper*]

The four hundred men in this list have actively helped the rebellion. There can be no question of trial for them. I ask that they be put to death.

POMPEY. That is out of the question. War will end when Cæsar surrenders. I cannot allow reprisals. I want Rome settled.

LENTULUS. Perhaps you will explain how you plan to administer Rome. When we return.

METELLUS [*softly*]. There will be an amnesty for offences committed?

POMPEY. Yes.

DOMITIUS. You will pardon these rebels?

POMPEY. If they submit.

LENTULUS [*slowly*]. Will you allow them to help in the reconstruction?

POMPEY [*hotly*]. Yes. Power is in too few hands. There must be a change in Rome. I would have these four hundred firebrands made Senators, to help us make the change wisely.

METELLUS. So.

DOMITIUS. Magnus. There is only one way of settling Rome. By showing her who is master in a way which she'll remember.

LENTULUS. Any dallying with these rebels will leave us where we were before. Hated, and flouted by the rabble, and in danger from it. Losing our privileges, one by one. Losing our possessions and our power. Magnus, I would ask you to weigh this proposal very carefully. It affects the future of the patrician idea.

POMPEY. And of Rome. What kind of future do you expect from a massacre like this? I will tell you what you will get. You will drive these four hundred firebrands into the Provinces, where it will take five years of war to crush them.

No. I'll go back with peace. Not a man shall be touched.

LENTULUS. Before we go back with peace, we must end the war. I have had letters from Rome.

Popular voice in Rome says that we have feared to risk a battle. That the war drags on, when it could be ended in a day.

That we dare not kill these representatives of the people.

That is a dangerous spirit in a city which we are about to rule. That spirit can only be broken by decisive success. We must go back with victory. A battle is certain victory to ourselves. We ask you to give battle.

METELLUS. We have asked this before, without success. We ask it now, feeling it to be a grave need. Lentulus has mentioned it as a political expedient. I add to that this, that our treasury is nearly empty. We have no means of raising more money. We have drained Spain and Asia for years to come. And your inactive plan of campaign has killed our credit. We must fight. We cannot afford to keep the field for another month.

POMPEY. Cæsar cannot keep the field for another week.

DOMITIUS. Cæsar will drag on, day by day, till the corn is ripe. It is not many days now to harvest. You let his men get a full provision and you will see how long they will keep the field. I could break that impostor's strength with the horse alone.

POMPEY. I can break his strength without risking a life. I will not give battle. Be thankful that we can end such a war with so little bloodshed.

[*The* GENERALS *rise*]

DOMITIUS. You are the oldest, Lentulus.

LENTULUS. It may lose us votes, remember. You are the most popular.

METELLUS. Perhaps I should do it. I am related.

POMPEY. What do you wish to say?

METELLUS. Magnus. I have to speak to you.

You love power too well.

Your command ends with the war.

You have tried to prolong your command by neglecting to end the war.

But the war is over.

You plan now to retain command while you impose your will upon the State. That is a menace to the Republic. We have been forced to convoke the Senate to discuss it.

The Senate has sanctioned the appointment of Tuditanus, and the list of the proscribed. It also commands that you give battle to Cæsar.

[*He gives a paper*]

[POMPEY *walks up stage slowly, then down. He stands at table, fronting them*]

POMPEY. What do you expect me to say, Conscript Fathers? That I refuse to obey this order?

I could refuse.

If I were Cæsar, or Lentulus. Or you, Domitius, or Metellus. I should refuse.

And my soldiers, or Cæsar's there, would work my will on a Senate which had so insulted me.

But I am Pompey the Great. I am bound by my military oath.

Do not think to humble me. Death is a little thing to the loss of conscience.

Death is easier than life to me.

But even if I die, Rome will be a prey to unscrupulous men.

There is no hope for Rome. She ends here. Disaster begins.

But for me, you would now be beggars at Cæsar's doors. I saved Rome from Cæsar.

And now Rome is to beg her life from you. You have used Pompey the Great to ruin her.

But you have first to fight for her.

You shall give your sin a dignity, by risking your lives for it.

[*He strikes the gong*]

[*Enter an* AIDE]

[*To* AIDE] Give the signal for battle.

[*Exit* AIDE]

You have your will, now.

This is the end.

And at the end, think what it is which you destroy.

Rome is nothing to you. Only the reward of greed, and hate, and pride.

The city where justice was born.

Look beyond your passions, at what Rome is. It is the state of Rome, not passion, which concerns us now.

A little while ago she was a market-town, governed by farmers. Now she rules Europe.

And in herself no change. Cramped still. Fettered. The same laws. The same rulers. Like iron on her heart.

And forty years of civil war. All my life. A blind turbulent heaving towards freedom.

[*Without, a confused noise, as of many men stirring from sleep. Shouted orders are clearly heard above the murmur*]

THE ORDERS. Fall in. Dress. Cohort. By the right. Cohort, to the left, wheel. Eyes left. Cohort. Fifers, three paces to the — Attention, etc., etc., Cohort. Salute, etc.

[*In a moment's silence a trumpet blows outside the tent. Cheering*]

POMPEY. Five minutes ago I had Rome's future in my hand. She was wax to my seal. I was going to free her.

Now is the time to free her. You can tear the scales and the chains from her. You can make her a State so splendid that Athens would be a dust-heap to her.

You will not.

You will drive her back three centuries, so that you may wreak your passions on her.

Go on, then. Destroy her. Or be destroyed.

Whether you win or lose, Rome ends.

[*A pause. Orders without*]

ORDERS. The cohorts will advance in — Cohort, halt. Ground arms. Attention. Form four deep. Attention. By the right. Quick march. Cohort. Cohort. To the left. Turn.

DOMITIUS. What orders have you?

[*For the next minute or two a noise of troops moving*]

POMPEY. You have fought this battle many times in your hearts. [*He flings the doors wide, showing a bright dawn*] Now you will fight it in earnest. You will fight the wild beasts whom I could have starved like beasts.

Go to your divisions.

[*The* GENERALS *go out silently.* POMPEY *stands by the table*]

ORDERS. Cohort. Halt. Ground arms. Attention. Form four deep. Cohort. Left turn.

[*Enter* PHILIP. POMPEY *does not look at him. Fifes of a cohort pass*]

PHILIP. Do you want me, my lord?

POMPEY [*turning*]. Can you sing, Philip?

PHILIP. Sing, my lord?

POMPEY. Yes.

PHILIP. I don't know, my lord.

POMPEY. What was that song we had? That night. In the Asian wars. When we broke Mithridates?

PHILIP [*hesitating*]. I don't know whether I can, my lord.

POMPEY. Sing.

PHILIP. I'll try, my lord.

[*He repeats*]

Though we are ringed with spears, though the last hope is gone,
Romans stand firm, the Roman dead look on.
Before our sparks of life blow back to him who gave,
Burn clear, brave hearts, and light our pathway to the grave.

POMPEY. Take my purple, Philip. [*He flings his purple aside*]

A CENTURION. Eyes left. Salute.

A COHORT PASSING. Hail! Pompey. Imperator. [*Trumpets*]

[*Curtain*]

ACT III

The Poop of a Lesbian Merchantman of the First Century B.C.

On each side, the bulwark of a ship, painted green. There are gaps, or gangways, in these bulwarks, so that people may go down the ship's side into boats.

At back of stage, the poop-rail, also painted green. A wooden belfry with a bell stands upon the middle of the poop-rail.

On each side of the bell is a ladder leading down to the main deck. Gaps in the poop-rail allow people to reach the poop by these ladders.

Above the deck, sloping from amidships like a tent, is an awning of blue and white baftas. This awning has a flap, which falls at back of stage, hiding the poop from the main deck. On both sides of the stage the awning is secured by stops to guys above the ship's bulwarks.

In the centre of the stage (if the theatre stage is so built) is a hatchway, surrounded by a raised white rim or coaming. This leads down to the cabins.

Behind it is a mast (painted "mast colour") which rises up through the awning.

Round the mast is a square of timbers, like a stout fence. These are the bitts, to which the running rigging is belayed.

Stout ropes and blocks lead along the mast.

ATTENDANTS, SAILORS, *etc., etc., keep always to the starboard side out of respect to* POMPEY, *who uses the weather, or honourable side.*

At the rising of the curtain CAPTAIN *is standing by poop-rail, looking at the men at work forward. The* BOY *holds up the awning so that he can see under it.*

THE CHANTYMAN [*heard off, amid a click of pawls*].

Old Pompey lost Pharsalia fight.

THE SAILORS [*heaving at the forward capstan*].

Mark well what I do say.

THE CHANTY.

Old Pompey lost Pharsalia fight.

THE SAILORS.

And Cæsar now is the world's delight.
And I'll go no more a-roving,
With Pompey the Great.
A-roving. A-roving.
Since roving's been my ru-i-n,
I'll go no more a-roving
With Pompey the Great.

THE MATE [*from far forward*]. Avast heaving. Walk back. [*Pause*] Unship your bars.

THE CAPTAIN. That'll do, boy. [BOY *drops awning*] Now we're riding to a single anchor.

THE BOY. Yes, sir.

THE CAPTAIN [*kindly*]. D' you know what little port that is yonder?

THE BOY. No, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. That's Pelusium, in Egypt. This is the Nile.

THE BOY. Is this where the King of Egypt lives, sir?

THE CAPTAIN [*pointing*]. Over yonder. Where all those soldiers are. That's where the King of Egypt is. Young King Ptolemy, who Pompey sent the letter to, after Cæsar beat him.

THE BOY. Why does Pompey come to him, sir? He's only a boy.

THE CAPTAIN. It was through Pompey he became king. And there are lots of Pompey's old soldiers yonder. An army of them.

THE BOY. What a lot of ships, sir.

THE CAPTAIN [*anxiously*]. Ye-es. A lot of ships.

THE BOY. They must be men of war, sir. There's a bugle. Oh, look, sir, at those big galleys. Hark at the bugles. [*Bugle-calls off*] Is that to call the slaves, sir?

THE CAPTAIN [*looking under the sharp of his hand*]. Is that a boat putting off from the flagship? That big galley nearest to us?

THE BOY. Yes, sir. Don't they pull well, sir? They're coming to us.

THE CAPTAIN. Quick. Get the red side-ropes rove.

[*The* BOY *reeves side-ropes, which he takes from locker by the gangway*]

THE BOY [*at his work*]. They're hailing us, sir.

A CRY. Ship ahoy! Ahoy, you!

THE CAPTAIN. Hulloh!

A CRY. What ship is that?

THE CAPTAIN. The *Fortune*. From Cyprus.

A CRY. Have you Lord Pompey aboard you?

THE CAPTAIN. Yes. Lord Pompey's aboard us. Down below. [*Pause*]

THE BOY. They seem to be talking together, sir.

A CRY. When did you leave Cyprus?

THE CAPTAIN [*humbly*]. At noon, sir, yesterday. [*A pause*]

A CRY. D'ye hear there? You're not to send any boat ashore.

THE CAPTAIN. Ay, ay, my lord.

THE BOY. They're pulling back to the ship, sir.

THE CAPTAIN [*testily*]. Quick. Dip our streamer. Dip our streamer, boy. Don't you know enough for that? [*The* BOY *runs aft and dips the streamer*] Again. Now. Once more. Here. [*He beckons*] Go below quietly, and see if Lord Pompey's stirring. [*The* BOY *goes down the hatch. The* CAPTAIN *walks up and down, uneasily looking at the distant ships*] No. No. I don't like it. [*He shakes his head*] I wish we were out of it. [*Re-enter* BOY] Well, lad?

THE BOY. Yes, sir. Lord Pompey's up, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. Ah. [*Kindly*] You'll be able to tell them, when you get home, that you were shipmates with Pompey the Great.

THE BOY. Yes, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. That's what comes of being a sailor.

THE BOY. Please, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. Yes, boy.

THE BOY. What is the name of that mountain, sir?

THE CAPTAIN. That? That's Mount Cassius. There's a tale about that mountain. Something about a king. Or some one to die there. I forget. Here. What are they doing aboard those galleys?

THE BOY. They are filling full of soldiers. Soldiers are putting off to them in boats.

THE CAPTAIN [*striking the bell once*]. Mr. Mate, there!

THE MATE [*below, out of sight*]. Sir.

[*Enter* MATE]

THE CAPTAIN. Oh, Mr. Mate. Here, boy. What are you listening at? Go forward. And if you want to see your mother again, you pray. Pray that King Ptolemy'll let you.

[*Exit* BOY]

[*The* CAPTAIN *speaks intently to the* MATE]. Look here. We're done. Pompey isn't wanted here. Those eunuchs have put the King against him. See those galleys? They're getting ready to sink us. If you see one of them getting under way, cut the cable. Don't wait for orders. Cut the cable, and hoist sail.

THE MATE. I'll make all ready, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. It makes your blood boil, though. A week back they'd have crawled all round Pompey for a chance to kiss his footman's boots. Now they're going to drive him out.

THE MATE. Well, sir. You can't expect gratitude from a king, they say. The world's wide. There's other lands besides Egypt. Egypt's got trouble enough, without Pompey. What did he come here for? That's what I don't see.

THE CAPTAIN. He's had a misfortune. One doesn't know where to turn when one's had a misfortune. And having a wife and that. Very likely he's beside himself, for all he doesn't take on.

THE MATE. He'd ought to have come with his fleet. That would have frightened them. Coming alone like this makes people think he's a beggar. D' you think they'll ram us?

THE CAPTAIN. I don't trust them.

THE MATE. The hands don't trust them, neither.

THE CAPTAIN. Ah! the growlers. What do they say?

THE MATE. They're saying they didn't sign on to be rammed.

THE CAPTAIN. They signed for what I choose.

THE MATE. Yes, sir. They're afraid of the soldiers and that.

THE CAPTAIN. They got sense. If I were Pompey, I'd run for it. A man with a wife like that didn't ought to seek trouble. Well. God send pay-day! Watch the hands and stand by. That's your job.

THE MATE. I'll make all clear, sir. Bosun, there!

BOSUN [*off*]. Sir?

THE MATE. Overhaul your gear. Have all ready for getting under way.

BOSUN. Have all ready, sir. I will, sir. [*Whistle*]

THE MATE [*going*]. There's his steward, sir. [*Exit*]

THE CAPTAIN. Steward.

PHILIP [*entering*]. Sir.

THE CAPTAIN. Oh! steward. [PHILIP *approaches*] Look here, steward. What's Pompey's object in coming here?

PHILIP. He's come to see the King.

THE CAPTAIN. Is he come to ask for shelter?

PHILIP. He's come to raise another army out of all his old soldiers here.

THE CAPTAIN. He won't get any soldiers here. They're all at the wars. The young King's fighting his sister.

PHILIP. That will be patched up. The young King thinks the world of my master. He'll do what Pompey wants.

THE CAPTAIN. He hasn't answered Pompey's letter yet.

PHILIP. No?

THE CAPTAIN. We've been told not to send a boat ashore.

PHILIP. Well, all I know is, the young King longs to honour Pompey. But for Pompey the old King would have died a poor flute-player in Ephesus. You can see for yourself he's coming. There's his state barge at the jetty. Look. They're out on the roofs. There's music.

[*Enter* POMPEY]

THE CAPTAIN [*unconvinced*]. It may be as you say, steward. Ah.

[*He starts, salutes, and hastily crosses to the starboard, or lee side*]

PHILIP. My lord. Do you know what day it is, my lord?

POMPEY. What day is it?

PHILIP. The day of your triumph, my lord. Your Asian triumph. Thirteen years ago.

POMPEY. Is it so long ago? That was a great day.

PHILIP. Yes, indeed, my lord, I'll never forget that day. We always like to keep it up with a little something among ourselves.

We brought you a few figs, my lord. They're only Cretans. [*He offers figs*] Just in honour of the day, my lord. If you would accept of them.

POMPEY [*taking and tasting*]. Thank you, Philip. [*To the* CAPTAIN] This old servant of mine is always bent on spoiling me.

THE CAPTAIN. Yes, my lord. So I see.

PHILIP [*going*]. I'm sure I hope to-day will be a great day too, my lord. [*Exit* PHILIP]

POMPEY. It should be, Philip. [*He lays figs on weather fife-rail*] Captain!

THE CAPTAIN. Yes, my lord.

POMPEY. Has any one come aboard for me?

THE CAPTAIN. No, my lord.

POMPEY. Thank you.

THE CAPTAIN. Beg pardon, my lord.

POMPEY. Well?

THE CAPTAIN. The flagship has ordered us not to send a boat ashore. I thought I ought to report it, my lord.

POMPEY. Thank you, Captain. A fine fleet here.

THE CAPTAIN [*meaningly*]. They seem to be getting their crews aboard.

POMPEY. What speed have those galleys?

THE CAPTAIN. Those there, my lord? They might make seventeen. That's with good rowers. And dead calm. And the ships new out of dock. In a wind like this, they wouldn't make more'n about eight. They can't work their oars in a sea-way. [*Pause*] Now's the time, my lord, if you think of putting to sea. By and by, may be, they'll be able to stop us.

POMPEY. Thank you, Captain.

THE CAPTAIN. I'll report any boat, my lord. [*Exit*]

[*Enter* CORNELIA]

CORNELIA. Has the King sent?

POMPEY. No.

CORNELIA. No answer?

POMPEY. Not yet.

CORNELIA. Can he know we are here?

POMPEY. Yes. He will come. He will come in person.

CORNELIA. Why has he not come already?

POMPEY. It is early.

CORNELIA. Do you think it is safe to wait? It is ominous. This silence. And all those ships. And the people crowding on the roofs. What if the King be against us?

POMPEY. He cannot be. Do not be afraid.

[*Enter* THEOPHANES]

THEOPHANES. Magnus. They have sent an order. We are not to send a boat ashore. They are plotting something.

POMPEY. If they were plotting, they would ask us to come ashore.

CORNELIA. But why should we not send a boat, if they are friendly?

POMPEY. The King will be coming in person. Then there was plague in Cyprus. We have not got a clean bill.

CORNELIA. But to be ordered.

THEOPHANES. The Admiral should have come.

POMPEY. This is a merchantman. We are not under Roman colours.

CORNELIA. The Captain there is anxious. Look at him.

THEOPHANES. Ask him.

POMPEY. It is necessary for the world that I see King Ptolemy.

[*The* CAPTAIN *flings down the halliard coil and goes below.*]

Strange. Is there any Cassius with Ptolemy.

CORNELIA. Lucius Cassius is dead, surely.

THEOPHANES. There's Quintus Cassius. But he is in Spain.

CORNELIA. Is there not Cneius Cassius? He was legate in one of Cæsar's legions?

POMPEY. Cneius? I thought he was killed?

THEOPHANES. I could find out. Sextus would know.

POMPEY. No. Do not wake him. It is absurd.

CORNELIA. Why do you ask?

POMPEY. When I was in Africa, at that time, an old woman bade me beware of Cassius. I have not thought of it for thirty-four years. An old black hag. Sitting in the sun, there. By the ruins of Carthage. Geminius was riding with me. She hobbled up on a crutch and plucked at my rein. "Young captain. You beware of Cassius. You that ride so proud, beware of Cassius. The sand is falling."

CORNELIA. Why should you think of that now?

POMPEY. Because I am going to victory, as I was then.

[*The* HANDS *come aft*]

THE MATE [*following*]. Get down off the poop. If you want anything, send a man aft.

1ST HAND. Begging your pardon, your honour. We want to speak.

2ND HAND. We mean to speak.

3RD HAND. We want to know why we're brought here.

4TH HAND. And how long we're to stay here.

2ND HAND. He's been beaten.

4TH HAND. He's got no friends. Our lives are as good to us as his is.

THE MATE. Down off the poop! Down with you! Bosun, there!

[*Struggling*]

POMPEY. What is the matter?

[*Struggling ends. Pause*]

1ST HAND. Begging your pardon, your honour. We wanted to see the Captain.

POMPEY. [*To the* MATE] What is their grievance?

THE MATE. Some more of their fancies, my lord. [*To the* HANDS] Get over to leeward.

POMPEY. They seem a good lot. What is it?

THE MATE. Oh, the Captain'll soon settle it, my lord. [*To the* HANDS] You wait.

[*Exit by hatch to find* CAPTAIN. *Pause.* POMPEY *takes a half turn, and then speaks*]

POMPEY. [*To* HANDS] Of what do you complain?

1ST HAND. Begging your pardon, your honour. We'd rather wait for the Captain.

POMPEY. What is wrong, though? Tell me.

1ST HAND. I'd rather not say, my lord.

POMPEY [*takes a half turn, and speaks again*]. Come. What is the trouble? Is it the food? Or the drink?

1ST HAND. Begging your pardon, your honour. We don't like the look of things.

POMPEY. What things?

1ST HAND. Begging your honour's pardon, the ships there.

2ND HAND. They're getting ready to sink us.

POMPEY. Why do you think that?

3RD HAND. You can see the soldiers going aboard them, can't you?

1ST HAND. [*To* 3RD] Here now. Here.

3RD HAND. [*To* 1ST] What's wrong? It's the truth. Isn't it?

POMPEY. So they are going aboard to sink us? Why should they sink us?

3RD HAND. Because you're aboard us. [*He stands out*] You're not wanted here. You're no good to Ptolemy.

Cæsar's the man, now, not you. You're no more than what we are.

[*To the* HANDS] And we're to be drowned, are we, because his mightiness that was is worth more dead than alive? He's down. He's no one. He's had fellows die for him for forty years. It's time he learned what it feels like himself.

4TH HAND. That's what I say.

3RD HAND. Come on!

2ND HAND. Man the halliards.

3RD HAND. We'll carry you to Cæsar. And sell you.

POMPEY. Stand back!

You say that the soldiers are coming to sink us?

There are five thousand troops there, and fifty ships.

Are they all coming to sink us?

It seems a large force to sink one ship, manned by such a company.

3RD HAND. Here. Look here!

1ST HAND. [*To* 3RD] You'll get us hanged.

2ND HAND. Give him sheet.

4TH HAND. How about us? That's what I say.

POMPEY. If I am still so terrible, I must save you. I will go to the flagship yonder. Man your boat.

3RD HAND. You will go to the flagship?

1ST HAND [*alarmed*]. Look at her. There.

4TH HAND. Look.

2ND HAND. Look at her. She's got her oars out.

1ST HAND. She's coming. We're gone up.

3RD HAND. Then he'll go first.

1ST HAND [*holding him*]. No, you don't.

[*Enter* CAPTAIN]

THE CAPTAIN. She's coming, my lord. Shall I cut? We might do it, even now.

POMPEY. She is not coming. And if she were, what is death?

THE CAPTAIN. Hard times for the widow, my lord.

POMPEY [*to the men*]. Leave the ropes.

Do you think the soul can be quenched with water? Or cut with swords? Or burned?

3RD HAND. I know my body can, my lord.

POMPEY. You do well to fear death. Go to your place.

[*Musingly*] If death can crush what comprehends heaven? Why! We are in a bad way, Captain.

[*The* HANDS *file off, quietly.* POMPEY *looks down on the main deck. The* CAPTAIN *stands apart anxiously watching the flagship.* CORNELIA *and* THEOPHANES *eye each other*]

CORNELIA. Is the flagship coming?

THEOPHANES. She is ready to come.

CORNELIA. To sink us?

THEOPHANES. She could sink us.

CORNELIA. I cannot bear this.

[POMPEY *turning, walks toward them*]

THEOPHANES. We ought to have gone to our fleet. We're helpless like this.

CORNELIA. Magnus. This isn't what we planned.

POMPEY. Let me reassure you. Egypt is friendly to me.

I saved her independence. I made the elder Ptolemy King. The young King is my ward, bound to me by intimate ties. Those troops are veterans of my Asian Army.

THEOPHANES. The young King's at his wits' end with civil war. How can he begin a war with Cæsar?

POMPEY. Cæsar will begin a war with him whether he takes me or rejects me. Cæsar wants Egypt, as Ptolemy very well knows.

CORNELIA [*bitterly*]. And we are suppliants to him. We Romans. To whom they should strike their flags. [*After a pause, quickly*] See if they refuse to salute us.

THEOPHANES. We should know what to expect then.

CORNELIA. Oh, let us be certain. Hoist your colours.

POMPEY. It is not time yet. I will hoist them when the watch ends.

[*The* CAPTAIN *strikes the bell once*]

THE CAPTAIN. One bell, my lord.

POMPEY. The watch is nearly out?

THE CAPTAIN. Nearly, my lord. Will you hoist any colours, my lord?

POMPEY. My consular colours.

THE CAPTAIN. I'm only a merchantman, my lord. If they should refuse to salute, my lord?

POMPEY. You will go alongside the flagship there, and order her to salute.

THE CAPTAIN [*going*]. I am all ready to get under way, my lord. Bosun, there! Stand by. Mr. Mate. Boy, there!

[*He goes to the break of the poop and looks down on main deck*]

Are your colours bent on, Centurion?

CENTURION [*off*]. Tell him, yes.

BOY [*off*]. All ready to hoist, sir.

THE CAPTAIN [*coming to* POMPEY]. All ready, my lord. Will you make eight bells, my lord?

POMPEY. When it is time. [*He paces leisurely*]

Theophanes. Have you your tables?

THEOPHANES. Yes.

POMPEY. I shall want you to take notes.

[*To* CORNELIA] What was that passage about the soul? We were reading it that day at Alba, when the women brought you their first-fruits? Our first year. We were in the garden. You were reading to me. There was a verse about the soul.

CORNELIA. The upright soul is safe?

POMPEY. Yes. That was the verse. I have always loved Alba. I was there as a child. We were happy there, that year.

CORNELIA. Very happy. And that day. The doves came, picking the spilled grain. And at night there was a moon.

POMPEY. All the quiet valley. And the owls were calling. Those little grey owls. Make eight bells, Captain.

[*The* CAPTAIN *makes it. The* BOSUN *pipes the colours up*]

THE CAPTAIN. Not so fast there, boy.

[*Eight bells is echoed over the harbour from ship to ship.* POMPEY *and* THEOPHANES *raise their right hands. Perhaps* CORNELIA *ought to veil*]

THEOPHANES. The flagship is hoisting her ensign. [*Bugles off*]

CORNELIA. Will she salute? Will she salute? There.

THEOPHANES. There. She dips it.

CORNELIA. They all salute.

THEOPHANES. Then we are safe.

POMPEY. That is settled, then. I am to be received. The King expects me.

THE CAPTAIN. I beg pardon, my lord. I think his Majesty the King is coming off to fetch you. The barge is putting off, my lord. [*Approaching*] No, my lord; it is not the King, it is one of the pearl-boats, my lord, which work the pearl-beds here.

POMPEY. Something of the kind. What do you make of her?

THE CAPTAIN. They pull very badly, my lord. They pull like soldiers.

POMPEY. They are soldiers. I see the gleam of armour.

THEOPHANES. Seven soldiers.

THE CAPTAIN. Am I to let them alongside, my lord?

POMPEY. Wait.

THEOPHANES. Has he sent a boat like that for you?

CORNELIA. You cannot go in that old boat.

THEOPHANES. Magnus. There is some treachery.

CORNELIA. Cneius. It is a dreadful risk. To stay.

POMPEY. It is necessary. I must carry this thing through. You would rather I ran the risk than let the world become — what it will become.

CORNELIA. Much rather.

POMPEY. You will understand, then.

THE CAPTAIN. They are hailing, my lord. Would the lady go below a little? They might fling a dart on board.

CORNELIA. The air is fresher here.

SEPTIMIUS [*off*]. Hail! Pompey. Imperator.

THE CAPTAIN. We could still run for it, my lord.

POMPEY. We must not show that we mistrust them.

SEPTIMIUS [*off*]. Hail, Pompey, Imperator!

POMPEY. Have your men ready to salute.

SEPTIMIUS [*off*]. In bow.

CORNELIA. Cneius. Cneius.

POMPEY. There is no danger. Have you the little book with my speech to Ptolemy?

CORNELIA. Here it is.

SEPTIMIUS [*off*]. Toss your starboard oars. Way enough.

POMPEY. Company there. Salute.

THE CAPTAIN. The call, there.

[*Enter* SEPTIMIUS, *a Roman military tribune, with* ACHILLAS EGYPTIAN, *both in military dress. The* BOSUN *pipes the side for each of them*]

POMPEY [*advancing*]. You come from King Ptolemy?

[SEPTIMIUS *salutes,* ACHILLAS *bows*]

ACHILLAS. From King Ptolemy. He send you royal greeting.

POMPEY. He wishes to see me?

ACHILLAS. He wish to see you. To be your friend.

POMPEY. Shall I bring the ship alongside the quay there?

ACHILLAS. There is much mud and

sandbanks. There would be no water for this galley. You have to take a boat.

POMPEY [*glancing at ships*]. Your fleet is getting under way here?

ACHILLAS [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Ah? Will you come into my boat?

POMPEY. She is not a very handsome boat.

ACHILLAS. No? It is bad weather sometimes.

POMPEY. [*To* SEPTIMIUS] I think I should know you, my friend. You and I have served together?

[SEPTIMIUS *nods, but does not answer*]

Where was it? I know your face. [*No answer*]

A long time ago. Eighteen years ago. In the war against the pirates? [*Pause*] Was it not? [*No answer*]

You commanded a company in my guard. [*Pause*] You did something? You burnt a ship one night? You paddled out alone and set fire to her? I remember you. I gave you a sword. You are wearing it now.

SEPTIMIUS [*turning to the boat, muttering to himself*]. I'm as good a man as you are.

ACHILLAS. You come in my little boat. I take you to the King. The King is your friend. Lovely lady, the King want to see him.

CORNELIA. Yes.

POMPEY. I will follow you. Go down into the boat.

[ACHILLAS, *bowing, goes to gangway, where he stands, looking aft*]

POMPEY. Now.

THEOPHANES. Magnus. You mustn't go.

CORNELIA. Cneius. Cneius. What do they mean?

THEOPHANES. You mustn't go, Magnus.

POMPEY. My beloved! You must stay here. You must not come.

CORNELIA. My darling! What are they going to do?

POMPEY. What God wills.

Theophanes. If this is the end, I wish it to be the end. Those arrangements of the fleet. Cancel them. You understand. Go to Cato. Tell Cato to submit to Cæsar. War will only mean more bloodshed. He cannot stand against Cæsar. I could have.

Scipio's daughter. Make your father submit to Cæsar. Keep my sons out of it. Tell them. End the war. Life is very grand, but there is something behind it. Something which strikes a mean. I had my hand on it. Come. Courage. These are Egyptians. [*To* CORNELIA]

Captain. You must sail. Stand by.

What else is there? Asia. Theophanes. Asia must submit. Send to the Kings. The world must make what terms it can. This is all in the event. If this is the end. You understand? If not, you know my orders.

Philip. Scythes. Cotta. Go down into the boat.

PHILIP. My lord. I've served you a long time, my lord.

POMPEY. What is it, Philip?

[COTTA *and* SCYTHES *go*]

PHILIP. My lord. My old, beloved lord.

POMPEY. Why, Philip. We are the only ones left. We are two old Sulla's men. Have you my cloak in the boat?

PHILIP. Forty years, my lord.

POMPEY. The broidered one. [*To* CORNELIA] Your gift. Come. Carry it down, man.

PHILIP. I wish it was to begin all over again. [*Exit*]

ACHILLAS. Will you come into the boat? The King is waiting.

CORNELIA. Cneius. My husband. My husband.

POMPEY. God only lends us.

If the King keep faith. We shall have time. Time for what we must imagine. If not. We know our love. The gods treasure you. [*He goes towards gangway.*]

Remember, Captain.

Theophanes. If I fail, you must warn Lentulus.

[*He goes to gangway. The* BOSUN *starts to pipe the side.* POMPEY *turns to the* BOY. BOSUN *stops his pipe.* POMPEY *takes figs from fife-rail and gives them to the* BOY]

Can you eat figs?

[*The* BOY *mumbles*]

What is your name?

[*The* BOY *bursts into tears*]

ACHILLAS [*at gangway*]. Give me your hand. I take your hand down.

POMPEY [*pausing in the gangway and looking back. Sadly. To* THEOPHANES].

"Into a tyrant's court the truly brave
Goes proudly, though he go to die a slave."

[*He goes down. The* BOSUN *pipes the side*]

SEPTIMIUS [*coldly*]. Back your port oars. Shove off. Give way together.

THE CAPTAIN [*softly to* MATE]. Go on there. Man your halliards.

THE MATE. Take the turns off. Stretch it along. Softly now. Stand by.

[*The* SEAMEN *coming behind* CORNELIA, *man the halliards. The* CHANTYMAN *stands on the bitts. All look after the boat*]

THE CHANTY. There's a lot of troops ashore.

THE MATE. S's't.

CORNELIA. They are not talking to him.

THEOPHANES. He is reading his speech. [*Pause*] He organises everything. Cæsar improvises.

CORNELIA. There they go out of the sun.

THEOPHANES. The hill casts a long shadow.

CORNELIA. What is the name of the hill?

THE CAPTAIN. Mount Cassius, lady.

THEOPHANES [*quickly*]. They are coming with banners. Look.

CORNELIA. He is safe.

THEOPHANES. There comes the King. Hark! Trumpets. They're saluting. He is standing up to land.

CORNELIA. Ah! Swords. He is stabbed.

THEOPHANES. Ah! you gods. You gods!

CORNELIA. Oh! He is killed! He is killed! He is killed! [*She collapses*]

THEOPHANES [*covering his eyes*]. The devils! The devils!

THE MATE. They stabbed him in the back.

ANTISTIA. It's ebb-tide now, my beauty.

THE CAPTAIN [*yelling*]. Cut the cable. [*Chopping forward*]

A VOICE. All gone, the cable.

THE MATE. Let fall.

A VOICE. All gone.

THE MATE. Sheet home. Hoist away.

THE MEN. Ho. [*They haul*]

THE CHANTY. Away ho! [*The* MEN *haul*]

[*He intones in a clear loud voice. The* SEAMEN *sing the chorus, hauling*]

[*This song is sung like an ordinary halliard chanty. The chorus is to the tune of the old chanty of "Hanging Johnny." The solo will be intoned clearly, without tune. It goes to fast time, the chorus starting almost before the soloist ends his line. The* MEN *must haul twice, in the proper manner, in each chorus. The hauling will have for natural accompaniments the whine of the three-sheaved block, the grunt of the parrels and the slat from the great sail*]

THE CHANTY.
Kneel to the beautiful women who bear us this strange brave fruit.

THE MEN. Away, i-oh.

THE CHANTY.
Man with his soul so noble: man half god and half brute.

THE MEN. So away, i-oh.

THE CHANTY.
Women bear him in pain that he may bring them tears.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTY.
He is a king on earth, he rules for a term of years.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTY.
And the conqueror's prize is dust and lost endeavour.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTY.
And the beaten man becomes a story for ever.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTY.
For the gods employ strange means to bring their will to be.

CHORUS.

THE CHANTY.
We are in the wise gods' hands and more we cannot see.

CHORUS. So away, i-oh.

A VOICE. High enough.

THE MATE. Lie to. [*The* SEAMEN *lay to the fall*] Make fast. Coil up.

A VOICE. All clear to seaward.

THE CAPTAIN. Pipe down.

[*The* BOSUN *pipes the belay*]

[*Curtain*]

EPILOGUE SPOKEN BY COTTA

Pompey was a great Captain, riding among Kings, a King,
Now he lies dead on the sand, an old blind tumbled thing.
Fate has her secret way to humble captains thus.
Fate comes to every one and takes the light from us.
And the beginning and the end are darkened waters where no lights be
But after many days the brook finds ocean
And the ship puts to sea.

NOTES

ON THE APPEARANCE OF POMPEY

Portraits exist of Cneius Pompeius Magnus. The most important of these is a marble bust at Copenhagen. Several likenesses are to be found on the gold and silver coins struck by his son, Sextus, in Spain. Plutarch says of him that, 'being come to man's state, there appeared in his gesture and behaviour a grave and princely majesty. His hair also stood a little upright, and the cast and soft moving of his eyes had a certain resemblance (as they said) of the statues and images of Alexander the Great.' This resemblance may still be traced.

At the time of his murder he was fifty-eight years old, a powerful, very active man, in the prime of life. His bust, evidently done towards the end of his life, shows that his hair, which was thick, coarse, and worn rather long, still tended to stand a little upright. The head is of great breadth at the eyes. The brow is low and lined with three deep lines of wrinkles going right across it in irregular M shape. The eyebrows are well marked: the supra-orbital ridge is heavy. The nose is full and strong, with the broad base which is so good an index of intellectual power. The septum is of great breadth. The mouth is of that kindly tightness which one sees in the portraits of some of our Admirals. Below the mouth is a deep horizontal dent. The chin is not cloven. The face is lined a good deal. A deep straight wrinkle runs from each side of the nose to the puckered angles of the mouth. The eyes are crows-footed. There are no indications as to the colour of the hair and eyes. The shape of the head suggests the brown or fair type of man. At the time of his death he was perhaps grizzled.

No known portrait exists of any of the other characters. Metellus came of a family once distinguished for pointed noses, Domitius of a family once famed for red hair. Cornelia was famous for a grave and gentle beauty. She was young, though already a widow, when Pompey married her, a few months before the civil trouble began.

ON THE FATE OF THE PERSONS IN THIS TRAGEDY

Philip. After religiously burning his master's body on the seashore, disappears from history.

Metellus Scipio. Fled from Pharsalia to Africa, where he carried on the war until 46 B.C., when he was defeated by Cæsar at Thapsus. Flying from Africa by sea, in bad weather, he was forced to put into the port of Hippo, where one of Cæsar's fleets lay at anchor. A battle followed. He is said to have drowned himself shortly before his ship was sunk.

Cn. Pompeius Theophanes. Returned to Italy, and was pardoned by Cæsar. He attained great fame as a writer. After his death the Lesbians paid him divine honours. His son held office under Augustus.

Marcus Cato. After Pharsalia, joined Scipio in Africa, and held command under him. He killed himself in Utica, shortly after the battle of Thapsus, so that he might not live to see the final extinction of liberty. His son was killed at Philippi, 'valiantly fighting against Augustus,' four years later.

Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. Was killed (some say by Mark Antony) either in the battle, or in the rout, of Pharsalia, at which he commanded the great brigade of horse, on the left of Pompey's army.

Marcus Acilius Glabrio. Continued in Cæsar's service, and rose to be governor of Achaia.

Lucius Lucceius. Returned to Rome, and received Cæsar's pardon. He was praised by Cicero for the excellence of his historical writings.

Lucius Afranius. After Pharsalia, joined Scipio in Africa, and held command under him, till the battle of Thapsus. While riding through Mauretania, on his way to Spain, after that disaster, he was ambushed and taken by Cæsar's lieutenant, P. Sitius. A few days later, the troops of Sitius killed him in a camp riot.

Lentulus Spinther. After Pharsalia, fled to Rhodes, where he was refused permission to land. He set sail again 'much against his will,' and either 'perished ingloriously' or disappeared from history.

Achillas Egyptian. Was killed by Arsinōe (Ptolemy's sister) and the eunuch Ganymed in the year after Pompey's murder.

ON THE HOUSE OF POMPEY, AFTER THE MURDER

Cornelia. After seeing her husband killed, fled to Cyrene, and thence to Rome, where, in time, Pompey's ashes were brought to her. She is said to have buried them 'in a town of hers by the city of Alba,' in Liguria.

Cn. Pompeius Magnus, the Triumvir's eldest son, by his third wife, Mucia, held Corcyra for a time, showing courage and bold strategic ideas. On hearing of his father's death, he went to Spain, where he raised a great army. He was defeated at the bloody battle of Munda, in the year 45. Soon after the battle, he was betrayed, taken and killed. His head was carried to Seville and exposed there to the public gaze.

Sextus Pompeius Magnus. The younger son (also by Mucia) continued the war in Africa, with Cato's party, till after the battle of Thapsus. He then joined his brother in Spain. After Cæsar's murder, he was proscribed by Octavian, and took the seas, with a fleet, burning, sinking, and intercepting commerce, till Octavian came to terms. On the recommencement of war between them, his fleet was beaten by Octavian's fleet under Agrippa. After trying vainly to beat up a force in Asia, he was taken and put to death at Miletus (probably by the order of Mark Antony) in the year 35. He left a daughter whose fate is uncertain. She was with him in Asia in 36.

Pompeia. The daughter (also by Mucia) married Faustus, the son of Sulla, who was killed with Afranius in the mutiny of the troops of P. Sitius, in Africa in 46. She afterwards married L. Cornelius Cinna. It is not known when she died; but it is certain that she predeceased her brother, Sextus. She had a son by Cornelius Cinna, who came to be Consul in A.D. 5. What became of her children by Faustus is not known.

And all their passionate hearts are dust,
And dust the great idea that burned
In various flames of love and lust
Till the world's brain was turned.

God, moving darkly in men's brains,
Using their passions as his tool,
Brings freedom with a tyrant's chains
And wisdom with the fool.

Blindly and bloodily we drift,
Our interests clog our hearts with dreams.
God make my brooding soul a rift
Through which a meaning gleams.

Feb. 8, 1908. *July 5, 1909.*

W. B. YEATS
AND
THE IRISH SCHOOL OF PLAYWRIGHTS

THE IRISH SCHOOL OF PLAYWRIGHTS

There is no need of approaching the Irish Dramatic Movement unless one knows something of the Dublin Riots, when Synge's "The Playboy of the Western World" was first given, on January 26, 1907. And the ill-will evident then was repeated in Boston, where the play was given on October 16, 1911, during a visit of the Irish Players to America. On the latter occasion, word was sent to the Mayor that the piece must be stopped, and throughout the evening hoots and hisses were mingled with the applause.

It was a very foolish demonstration in Dublin, and a still more unreasonable one in Boston, and the ground of complaint in both instances was the same. A full account of the disturbance has been feelingly written by Lady Gregory in her peculiarly naïve autobiographical volume, "Our Irish Theatre." The Irishman has always been sensitive about the stage Irishman. Resentment has been felt against the caricature portraits that have found their way into the previous history of the theatre. When Synge's play was announced, word was sent abroad that in its chief character it glorified a parricide, who, in a fit of temper, kills his father and sallies forth to boast of it. "That is against Irish nature," exclaimed the true patriot. The fact is, Synge's satire in this particular piece is the satire of Ibsen's "Peer Gynt." On the opening night, with bells and horns and whistles drowning the actors' voices, it was small wonder that the audience had little time in which to realize or enjoy the rustic quality of the piece. It seemed as though there were concerted action to break up the play rather than to hear it. The demonstration made W. B. Yeats dreadfully uncomfortable; he was away from Dublin at the time, and the first despatch told him of success, hastily followed by a second despatch deploring the disorder.

Probably never before in the history of the theatre had an audience so brazenly tried to dictate terms to the actors. Warnings were sent, both in Dublin and in Boston, and advice was given that certain lines had best be left unspoken. In fact, had the wishes of the mob been met, the whole Irish peasantry would have been cut deliberately from the text.

The actors went on with their parts throughout the evening, though no word could make itself heard above the tumult. In Dublin, pamphlets were written, condemning Synge as a maligner of Irish womanhood; in Boston, letters of protest filled the newspapers, and editors sought the opinions of prominent people. And all because they did not understand that Synge, in his short career as a dramatist, was not a literal realist, but, for the sheer fun of amusement, had exalted a liar to the height of a hero. In this way Synge was ironically ridiculing the simple faith of the Irish people. And afterwards the combatants took account of their wounds. "Look," said one man on the streets of Dublin, pointing to a space where two teeth had been, "look, I lost those on the opening of 'The Playboy of the Western World.'"

The Abbey Theatre has thriven in an atmosphere of opposition, and politics float beneath the lintel of its door. The Viceroy of Ireland will not come to it, because the band refuses to play "God Save the King"; he has been known to refuse to enter the theatre because, as a representative of Royalty, the management denied him the red velvet carpet in the aisle which his position commands. And, in defiance of the English censor, the theatre has sheltered Shaw. In retaliation the Crown authorities, empowered to grant patents to the theatres, have limited Yeats's playhouse to dramas of Irish life only. Thus England has defined more rigorously than art would define it the scope of the Irish National Theatre.

A movement opposed is usually one with the red blood of life in it; and that was the healthy aspect of the Celtic renaissance before the War. For, as Yeats has said, "An audience with national feeling is alive; at the worst it is alive enough to quarrel with."

There comes a time, in every literary movement, when art cannot thrive alone on ideals and theories; when it has to have money for its maintenance. In 1904, W. B. Yeats came to America on a lecture tour, and the practical result of this visit was that thereafter he was better enabled to devote his attention and energy to a dramatic cause born of his individual fervour. After a second trip to America, in 1911, Yeats returned home with a comfortable feeling that the Irish Players were making profit in their tour of the United States, as well as attaining glory.

Strange to say, this art movement in Ireland, which is so closely identified with the history and development of Yeats, is not so significant for its æsthetic value as for its connection with the nationalism which is part and parcel of the Irish make-up. Seeing that immediate independence would not be offered them through political channels, and realizing a dangerous apathy of the Irish people toward an art already at hand in their natures and in their local surroundings, in their traditions and mystic superstitions, societies were founded for the development and furtherance of things strictly Irish. The Gaelic language was revived. The Irish legends and sagas were utilized in order to symbolize the inherent glory of Erin. From this impulse, a school of playwrights, representing in their expression both realism and symbolism, sprang into being. It is in this school that we find Ireland reflecting her nationalism and giving utterance to her individual existence. Likewise, Irish industry was encouraged. The spirit was not so much parochial as it was insular, and this distinction gives a broader sweep to both the poetry and the drama of Ireland.

It were wrong, indeed, to lay Ireland's love of nationalism entirely to her hatred of England, even though Mario Borso has claimed, in his book on "The English Stage," that she

> has remained deeply religious, bigoted and Papist, simply because Catholicism appeals to her as a weapon wherewith to fight Protestant England.

It is wrong to assume that, before the War and before the Ulster agitation, Ireland fathered individual art entirely for the sake of political propaganda, inasmuch as Yeats, in defining a national literature, has claimed that "It is the work of writers who are moulded by influences that are moulding their country, and who write out of so deep a life that they are accepted there in the end."

The Celtic renaissance, brought about by the denial of political right, by the postponement of Home Rule, by the lost hope of Parnell, and by the removal of

Gladstone, simply awakened Irish pride in the past, and encouraged a vision of the Irish future, and a loving scrutiny of the Irish present which, in their several ways, are the characteristics of the Irish literature in this modern revival.

Some people claim that the revival of Gaelic, encouraged by Douglas Hyde, Yeats, and others, was simply a move on the part of the Irish to irritate the English local authorities, who knew nothing of and cared less about the dialect. Stories are preserved of postal officials returning envelopes addressed in the uncial script, which to the eye relates Gaelic to Greek; others claim that once upon a time an Irish member in the House of Commons began his speech in his native *patois*, much to the consternation and disgust of his associates. But Yeats is authority for the statement that the revival of their ancient language has had its social purpose; that it has served in some instances to drive drink from the land. "Teach us," cry the children of hill and glen, "teach us the Gaelic which is the only tongue spoken in Paradise." Hence, in lonely cabins, under thatched roof, a dead language has come to life again. And it seemed at the outset as though Gaelic was to have a wider sway than Mistral's "Langue d'Oc" in the heart of Provence.

The Celtic renaissance began about the year 1890 and declared itself very rapidly in definite channels. The Irish peasant was made the central object of interest; the squalor and poverty in which he lived were projected against the rich background of folk-lore before which he moved. Literature had caught flashes of Irish peasant life before in Maria Edgeworth's "Castle Rackrent." But now it was to exalt the very heart of Ireland itself. Irish character heretofore had been cased in the mould of English models, as in Goldsmith and in Sheridan; or had been conventionally caricatured and degraded as in Boucicault. Now, Irish character was destined to be depicted through the medium of Irish sympathy and pride.

This intellectual energy gathering headway, the Gaelic League was founded in 1893, probably encouraged through the establishment of the National Literary Society by Yeats in Dublin, during 1891. Dates are significant only as an indication of the rapid spread of the Irish Movement. The year 1893 likewise saw the light of the Irish Literary Society and of the Irish Text Society, both intent on editing Old Irish manuscripts. Yeats's literary organization fathered the cause of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1898, and it came into existence with a policy as invigorating and as protective of originality as the Independent Theatre in London and Antoine's Théâtre Libre in Paris.

It is difficult to surmise what would have been the fate of the Irish Theatre Movement, built upon ideas, and as poor as the Irish peasantry itself, had it not been for the timely assistance of Miss A. E. F. Horniman, a patroness of the arts and a patron saint to the repertory idea.

When the theatre began, there were no Irish actors to take the parts in Yeats's "Countess Cathleen." Therefore, on May 8, 1899, in the ancient concert-room of Dublin, an English company produced the piece. This performance resulted in an opposition indicative of the sensitiveness of the people to any criticism of any special characteristics which might be considered general traits of the Irish people. Dubliners argued that it was unpatriotic of Yeats to have *Countess Cathleen* sell her soul to the devil in order to relieve her people of famine, inasmuch as not only was it beneath the dignity of an Irishman to sell his soul to the devil, but no Irishman would dare to make such a bargain. The high seriousness of the play escaped them in the temper of the moment. Referring to this incident, Yeats has written:

> The greatest difficulty before the creator of a living Irish drama has been, and to some extent still is, the extreme sensitiveness of a nation, which has come to look upon Irish literature, not as a free play of the mind over the surface and in the depths of life, but as a defence delivered before a prejudiced jury, who have heard a very confident advocate on the other side.

Certain it is that the history of the establishment of any Irish Theatre must inevitably be bound up with the flare of Irish temper.

In 1917, there was an effort, on the part of some enthusiastic Irish literary folk in New York, to establish the Irish Theatre of America. When one of the officers was asked what play had been accepted for the opening bill, the reply was: "We have met several times to make our choice, but at each conference our members have split into factions, one believing that Sir Roger Casement should have been shot, and the other that he should not have been shot. With the consequence that no play has thus far been selected for the Irish Theatre." That is the whole spirit of contention which has helped to retard the development of an Irish National playhouse.

In 1903, W. G. Fay gathered about him a small band of Irish amateurs calling themselves the Irish National Dramatic Company; and this later became the Irish National Theatre Society. The members of the organization, in their ordinary pursuits, were workers and clerks concerned in efforts furthest away from art. These evening contributions were their recreation. About this time, Miss Horniman offered her assistance. Beginning with 1904, she not only allowed the National Theatre Society a small annual subsidy, but she purchased the old theatre of the Mechanics Institute, in Dublin, and turned it over to the Society rent free. The house was renovated by Irish skill and Irish labour. Thus the Abbey Theatre came into existence.

An art theatre must not only be representative of an art idea, but it must present plays which are product of this idea. And when a theatre starts its career with the distinct object of arousing Ireland's consciousness of herself, it has to be supplied with material of national significance. Had it not been for the efforts of Yeats and Edward Martyn, there would have been no Synge and no Lady Gregory. These two were born out of the very heart of the Movement, and these two were fathered by Yeats. They are not exotics, as George Moore has ever been in his relation to the Irish Theatre; they are close to the heart of the land. Should one wish to gain knowledge of peasant life and to know how that knowledge was enriched by the devotees of the New Irish Theatre, read Yeats's "Celtic Twilight," filled with the elemental superstitions of a peasantry sprung from the soil. Should one wish to follow the sources of Synge's poetic, though none the less elemental pictures of Irish life, read his "The Aran Islands," which is a revised notebook of his impressions after an intimate stay with a peculiar people. Ever since the Movement began, the Irish student has been self-consciously alive to the gathering of facts; he has frequented cabin and field and has courted intimate familiarity with the peasant; he has tried, in every way, to obtain his end without awakening any self-consciousness on the part of the people. Even Synge, intent on catching every variation of speech among the Aran people, was known to eavesdrop at doors ajar, or to put his ears to cracks in a rotting floor so as to hear some conversation in a room beneath.

The enthusiasm of the Irish writer of the Celtic renaissance has led him often to

think more of life than of expression. But Yeats is nothing if not an artist, and he has always insisted that Irishmen must study English, must draw their form from the very best sources, must not lay themselves open to the charge that they are ungrammatical. If necessary, they must follow William Blake's example, — they must copy out the English Bible. Hence Yeats's significant mandate, "Let us learn construction from the masters and dialogue from ourselves."

Yeats has edited two magazines, which he has dedicated to the cause of Irish art, life, and literature. There were three numbers of *Beltaine*, after which the name of the periodical was altered to *Samhain*, meaning "the beginning of Autumn." It was a casual periodical, issued once yearly, or rather issued whenever Yeats was in the mood for it, and no reader interested in the Celtic revival can afford to miss it, for it contains the essence of Yeats's fervour. The Movement was rapid, but not of easy growth. It has, as we have hinted, evolved from riot. But its influence has been great. In fact, as George Moore has written:

> Many will think that I am guilty of exaggeration when I say that the Irish Literary Theatre has done more to awaken intellectual life in Ireland than Trinity College.

Not the least agreeable part of this renaissance is to be had in the growth of autobiographical impression around it. A living, breathing, pastoral quality is to be found in certain chapters of Moore's "Hail and Farewell," descriptive in delightfully impertinent spirit of the personalities and the personalia centering about the early performances of the Irish National Theatre. Had the Movement produced nothing more than these impressions and naïve tributes to the cause and to the people behind the cause, in the writings of Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge, it would have contributed much to the picturesque side of the history of dramatic art. For, despite the opposition met everywhere, the Movement has encouraged comradeship which is felt whenever a group of the Irish Players is found. Conversation with Yeats and Lady Gregory is replete with the sparkle of enthusiasm. On their visit to America with the Abbey Theatre Players, they referred to "our little plays" as a mother would speak of her children. The players on their American visit were moved by no pretensions. The Irish dramatists who came over with them were mystically silent. As the dominant force in the revival, Yeats's whole method in relation to the theatre sprang from high imagination; he has lived up to his theory of acting, and has kept the technique simple, and he has insisted on the scenery departing from minute detail and extravagance. "We have," he once wrote, "far greater need of the severe discipline of French and Scandinavian drama than of Shakespeare's luxuriance."

War changes all things. What the Celtic renaissance will be after the present European conflict it is as difficult to say as what the world will be after nations have ceased to war upon each other. But historically we may say, looking back on the history of the Celtic renaissance as it was until August, 1914, that this Irish renaissance was Yeats. He steeped himself in Irish verse and held firmly to his art ideals. Out of a folk literature he has drawn a mysticism akin to that of Maeterlinck, yet different from Maeterlinck in that it upheld both nationalism and a peculiar quality of humour. Though he started out with no theory of the unexpressed, such as the Belgian poet held, yet in Yeats's plays there is an interior beauty, a spiritual texture akin to that of Maeterlinck. It is strange that Yeats should have been so

closely identified with the Abbey Theatre, and yet should have succeeded in remaining so far removed from the real dramatic.

When he was last in America, his appearance was that of the dreamer. No visitor to our shores has ever remained so aloof from the stir of American life and condition. Tall, with slightly stooping shoulders, his dark hair shot through with grey, and parted carelessly on one side, his long face with its heavy jaw, his sharp nose, with delicately cut nostrils revealing sensitiveness, his small eyes deep-set above high cheek bones, his glasses oddly cut to allow of a straight piece to bridge the nose, this was the picture of Yeats during his visit in 1911. There was no colour to his face. The forehead was high, with arched brows that in moments of contemplation were raised to the point of interrogation. When talking, he gazed fixedly at one. His nervous hands moved constantly. His manner, rather than his appearance, proclaimed the poet, even though a soft flowing tie was the conventional sign. His talk was rapid, with now and then a slight hesitation, due to thought being ahead of expression.

Such a man was responsible for the prestige of the Irish Players, and was inspiration for the policy of the Irish Repertory Theatre.

It was while in Paris, intent on establishing another society, during 1897, that Yeats came across Synge, tucked away in the Latin Quarter. Ireland was farthest from the latter's thoughts, for Synge had been in France since his Trinity College days, and was much more concerned about French literature than about the counties of Wicklow, Kerry, and Connemara, which afterwards formed the setting for his "Aran Islands."

Eloquent, at all time, regarding the art of Ireland, Yeats persuaded Synge to return to his own land and to throw his energies into the Celtic Renaissance Movement. This he did, and there developed in his interest a new characteristic not heretofore found in his poetry, his criticism, or his stories, — the dramatic instinct which was latent in the character of Synge. One has but to read here and there in his book of travel to understand the sources of his very vivid plays. Thus, for a second time, Yeats became the prime mover in developing a talent more dramatic than his own, more wild and ungovernable, and filled with a gypsy poetry born of the wild west of Ireland. For Synge's observation is tinged with satire, a phlegmatic strain as variable as the humour of "Peer Gynt"; thus "The Playboy of the Western World" could not help but be pre-ordained by his personality.

Even if Yeats has not justified his full claim to dramatic honours — though "Cathleen ni Houlihan" is rightly popular and holds its own in Dublin's favour with Synge's "The Playboy of the Western World" — at least he may be proud that the three products emanating from his enthusiasm and sacrifice have been successful: The significant position of the Abbey Theatre which continued even after Miss Horniman withdrew her subsidy, Synge's permanent literary quality, and Lady Gregory's healthy humour of life. There is no despondency in the comedy of Synge — no Celtic throb of dreadful sorrow, such as is to be found in the verse of Lionel Johnson. His plays contain the red blood of passion, while the dramas of Yeats have the white glint of dreams.

The emotionalism of Yeats is balanced by a critical attitude toward the Irish Movement. A reading of the too few copies of *Samhain* will demonstrate that. His desire has always been to have the common man understand great art. Yet his own poetry has a quality about it which only the learned and the cultivated

may understand. He has placed himself in that stream of reaction against eighteenth-century rationalism and nineteenth-century materialism, and he has created something different from the symbolism of Wagner, the pre-Raphaelite school in England, and de l'Isle-Adam, Mallarmé and Maeterlinck in France.

Yeats has always been persistent in his separation of the circumstances of life from what he has called the emotional values of poetry. Though aware that most of the school emanating from his enthusiasm wrote of a condition that was part of the actual physical and political condition of Ireland, still Yeats has been unswerving in his demand for contemplative mood and imaginative originality in art. At one time a young woman came to him for advice. He recognized in her certain talent which was being perverted by the theatre of commerce. His recommendation to her was to fall into an original attitude toward life, but he warned her that no sooner should she do so than she would have her class against her. Here's where the Irish Movement found its greatest handicap; in the past it has been opposed in quarters where it would most have served. There were some who feared that the tales of Ireland, with their overpowering passion, would have a baleful influence on the crowd. But "A. E." (Russell), writing on "Dramatic Treatment of Heroic Literature", claimed that there need be no fear "that many forbidden subjects will be themes for dramatic art; that Maene with her many husbands will walk the stage and the lusts of an earlier age be revived to please the lusts of to-day. The danger of art is not in its subjects, but in the attitude of the artist's mind."

What Yeats's attitude was in 1911, when he came to America on a visit, seems to have been well reflected in his utterances during the Irish Players' appearance in Boston. Speaking before the Drama League, he said:

> From the first start of our intellectual movement in Ireland, our faith in success has come from our knowledge of the life of the country places and the imaginative beauty of their speech. One discovers thoughts there not very unlike those of the Greek dramatists. Of course there is a great deal that is crude, but there are songs and stories showing an attitude of mind that seems the very root of art.

Under the auspices of the Harvard Dramatic Club, Yeats approached his favourite theme of the Theatre of Beauty, in which light and shadow were to be in accord with the theories made possible by Gordon Craig's new inventions. The Irish scenic artists, from the very beginning, have upheld the intention to produce a more general, a more symbolic, a more imaginative setting, that shall give the feeling of life rather than its appearance.

A word regarding the Abbey Players' success in America, during their tour of 1911, will add further to a general impression of the Irish Players' accomplishment. They had come heralded from England, and praised for their sincerity and their lack of artificial acting. They brought with them a varied repertory. To perform Synge's "The Shadow of the Glen" and Shaw's "The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet" in one afternoon requires no little adaptability — the one is so full of deep tragedy, the other so sparkling with impertinence. And the two extremes of the Irish Theatre are very well illustrated when Synge's "Riders to the Sea" and Lady Gregory's "The Rising of the Moon", "Spreading the News", or, "The Workhouse Ward" are contrasted.

The players who came with Yeats were unsophisticated; they acted with an

intensity that showed how well they felt the life they were called upon to portray. They read verse with an understanding of its rhythmic quality. They passed from gravity to humour — a surprising characteristic in Synge — with an adaptability that showed how pliable their art was, even if not perfect in their hands. Their costumes were old and torn, green with the age of the pawnshop, grimy with the dirt of the road. These players came from the rank and file of workers, with no professional preparation for the stage. What they learned, they gained in the theatre itself. Their crudeness was the crudity of childlike love of play. Both the Irish playwright and the Irish actor impressed us with the fact that they were very much like children in their naïve spirit.

The repertory brought from Ireland created no end of criticism. T. C. Murray's "Birthright", brutal in parts; Lady Gregory's "Hyacinth Halvey", considered her best; and Synge's "The Shadow of the Glen" challenged the patience of the Irish-American, who contended that in every way these pieces distorted Irish life and Irish character. The professional actor found much that was intellectual in the Irish repertory. The critic found much that was austere. But the pathos in Irish drama is poignant, the humour volatile, the character rich in colour. In performing "Cathleen ni Houlihan", though the setting might be as bare as that which pictures "The Shadow of the Glen", the spiritual fervour of the reading, as trained by Yeats, filled the dim cottage with a light which was purely the light of exalted feeling and poetry.

The very names of the Irish Players brought poetry to the ear — Eithne Magee, Eileen O'Doherty, Maire ni Shiubhlaigh, Cathleen Nesbit. The tongue rolls over them deliciously. Read Synge's dialogue after you have heard these actors, and the very rhythm of the prose is Irish.

Before the War, the Irish dramatic art was in a healthy way of increase. But there has always been one unfortunate factor in the Movement; both dramatist and actor have been content to remain self-conscious in their nationality. They have never once allowed you to forget that they were Irish, and that they represented the Irish drama. At the present, this provincialism is forgivable. Yet it is difficult to believe that these simple folk will ever come to agree with you that anything worth while is to be found outside of home. Before the War, the world movement to them paled in the face of the Celtic renaissance.

It struck the present Editor, during conversation with the Irish Players on their last visit, that the personal value was the rich value of Yeats's school of Irish dramatists. I was made to feel that the Irish theatre was my theatre. In the lobby, a stately woman, dressed in black, with an Irish lace veil over her hair, walked familiarly from friend to friend. She held red roses in her arms, and a smile of excitement was on her lips. This was Lady Gregory. Like a sudden gust of wind, with rapid nervous strides, a man passed to his orchestra chair, looking neither to right nor to left of him, and only dimly conscious of the crowd. This was Yeats. By a bookstall in the lobby, with the published plays of the Irish Theatre piled upon a table, stood three or four of the Irish dramatists themselves, — all with mystic enquiry on their faces. Truly, one felt that it was a gathering of the clans!

CATHLEEN NI HOULIHAN

(1902)

By William Butler Yeats

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

William Butler Yeats was born at Sandymount, Dublin, June 13, 1865. His grandfather lived at Sligo, a locality familiarly treated in the poet's early prose and verse. His father, John Yeats, is an artist with peculiar national characteristics.

Whoever would know something of the temperament of Yeats as a boy needs must turn to the autobiographical reminiscences of Mrs. Katherine Tynan Hinkson; and throughout the prose work of Yeats one is able to detect the reasons for every change of thought and expression in his development. Like his brother, J. B. Yeats, the poet at first turned his attention, after receiving his education at the Dublin Erasmus School, to the study of art. During this time he was seeking for some means of awakening his country to a sense of its national dignity, and the mystic quality of his later verse was foreshadowed by his interest in theosophy.

When, in 1887, he turned to London, he was writing poetry, and was under the influence of William Morris. His friends of the time were Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and Arthur Symons.

Between this year of 1887 and 1891, when the Irish Literary Theatre began, there developed in Yeats's character all those ideals of art which were to find practical outlet in the Irish renaissance. There is a naïve analysis of his own transformation in everything he wrote. We find him explaining the reasons for his turning from art to poetry. His methods of writing are dwelt upon in his essays, "Ideas of Good and Evil." His explanation of the symbol is bound up in his explanation of himself. Everything he did was very personal, even to those experiments which he conducted with the psaltery in connection with the mere poetry of words. If Arthur Symons, in later years, was to place Yeats in the symbolist movement, a critic, Forrest Reid, believes that he was in that movement merely to oblige Symons and Mallarmé, his art being primarily that of a natural singer.

Whatever Yeats gained from his association with Morris, there is no doubt that Yeats's sister, who established the Cuala industries, near Dublin, learned much about embroidery from Morris's daughter. There was a beautiful utilitarian strain in some part of the Irish revival. Utilitarianism, however, is farthest away from the make-up of Yeats, who, in 1898, showed how he wished to cut himself away from worldly moorings and sail the high seas of unfettered thought. He wrote:

> I believe that the renewal of belief, which is the great movement of our time, will more and more liberate the arts from their age and from their life, and leave them more and more free to lose themselves in beauty.

From the time that Yeats went to London with his family, in 1887, he began consistently to lose himself in beauty. Everything mystic appealed to him, even to the study of magic. His enthusiasm was that of the poet moved by impulse. One of his numerous biographers tells us that "A. E." described Yeats as one who, re-

turning to his lodgings late in the evening, would wish to continue his talks on art and poetry through the wee small hours of the night. The present Editor remembers, after a most beautiful production of his "Cathleen ni Houlihan", in Boston, meeting Yeats at his hotel, at one o'clock, and sitting spellbound while, in the pure exhilaration of his success, he talked, not of the theatre, but of the power of poetry, and the music of words, and the high value of imagination in practical life.

"The Countess Cathleen" was written in 1892, and was not staged until seven years after. The final version of this play, according to Yeats's collected works, was not given to the public until 1912. This shows that, to bibliophiles, the earlier editions of Yeats's works already have an immense value. "The Land of the Heart's Desire", with its Sligo background, was performed at the Avenue Theatre, in London, in the spring of 1894.

In April, 1902, Yeats's most distinctively dramatic piece, "Cathleen ni Houlihan", was given by W. G. Fay's company, and in October of that year it was published in *Samhain*. It was after this that Yeats published his "Plays for an Irish Theatre", and dedicated the volume to Lady Gregory, making known certain facts concerning the play which are given herewith:

My Dear Lady Gregory:

I dedicate to you two volumes of plays that are in part your own.

When I was a boy I used to wander about at Rosses Point and Ballisodare listening to old songs and stories. I wrote down what I heard and made poems out of the stories or put them into the little chapters of the first edition of the "Celtic Twilight", and that is how I began to write in the Irish way.

Then I went to London to make my living, and though I spent a part of every year in Ireland and tried to keep the old life in my memory by reading every country tale I could find in books or old newspapers, I began to forget the true countenance of country life. The old tales were still alive for me, indeed, but with a new, strange, half-unreal life, as if in a wizard's glass, until at last, when I had finished "The Secret Rose", and was halfway through "The Wind among the Reeds", a wise woman in her trance told me that my inspiration was from the moon, and that I should always live close to water, for my work was getting too full of those little jewelled thoughts that come from the sun and have no nation. I have no need to turn to my books of astrology to know that the common people are under the moon, or to Porphyry to remember the image-making power of the waters. Nor did I doubt the entire truth of what she said to me, for my head was full of fables that I had no longer the knowledge and emotion to write. Then you brought me with you to see your friends in the cottages, and to talk to old wise men on Slieve Echtge, and we gathered together, or you gathered for me, a great number of stories and traditional beliefs. You taught me to understand again, and much more perfectly than before, the true countenance of country life.

One night I had a dream, almost as distinct as a vision, of a cottage where there was well-being and firelight and talk of a marriage, and into the midst of that cottage there came an old woman in a long cloak. She was Ireland herself, that Cathleen ni Houlihan for whom so many songs have been sung and about whom so many stories have been told and for whose sake so many have gone to their death. I thought if I could write this out as a little play I could make others see my dream as I had seen it, but I could not get down

> out of that high window of dramatic verse, and in spite of all you had done for me I had not the country speech. One has to live among the people, like you, of whom an old man said in my hearing, "She has been a serving-maid among us", before one can think the thoughts of the people and speak with their tongue. We turned my dream into the little play, "Cathleen ni Houlihan", and when we gave it to the little theatre in Dublin and found that the working-people liked it, you helped me to put my other dramatic fables into speech. Some of these have already been acted, but some may not be acted for a long time; but all seem to me, though they were but part of a summer's work, to have more of that countenance of country life than anything I have done since I was a boy.

The collaboration of Yeats and Lady Gregory was of slow growth, beginning from a mere suggestion on the part of Lady Gregory who had, at the beginning, the ideas rather than the technique, and increasing until she did her full share in the work. As she says, in her "Our Irish Theatre", Yeats dictated most of "Diarmuid and Grania" to her, during the course of which she suggested, here and there, certain sentences. And in her modesty she confesses that when the time came for writing, where there was nothing she "helped to fill spaces." This latter piece was re-written by both of them under the title of "The Unicorn from the Stars."

The next piece of collaborative work was "Cathleen ni Houlihan"; and unreservedly Lady Gregory declares that "we wrote it together." Mr. Reid says that "The wording of the greater part of the dialogue is either suggested by her or imitated from her." In the course of an article, published in *The Fortnightly Review*, and entitled "An Uncommercial Theatre", Stephen Gwynn writes:

> It is necessary to explain for English readers that Cathleen ni Houlihan was one of the names which poets in the eighteenth century used to cloak, in the disguise of love-songs, their forbidden passion for Ireland; that the "Shan van Vocht," or "Poor Old Woman," was another of these names; and that Killala, near which, in 1798, is laid the scene of Mr. Yeats's play, is the place where Humbert's ill-starred but glorious expedition made its landing. But there was no need to tell all this to the Dublin audience.

Readers who wish first-hand impressions of the opening performance of "Cathleen ni Houlihan", as first played at St. Theresa's Hall, in Dublin, with W. G. Fay as the old countryman and Maude Gonne as *Cathleen*, should turn to George Moore's "Avé." The sheer delicacy and beauty of the mystic symbolism in this play, to which was added a national strain which gave to the piece some political significance, are its two dominant characteristics. The Irish audiences, while recognizing the poetry and beauty of the dialogue as literature, were resentful of the application of the legend to Irish condition, and they were as hot-headed in their writing of pamphlets against it as they were in hurling anathemas against "The Playboy of the Western World."

Yet this play will last as long as the Irish Theatre. It has not the moral delicacy of "The Hour-Glass", nor the fragile poetic beauty of "The Land of the Heart's Desire." But there is a dramatic quality to it which no amount of symbolism can overcloud. In America, "Cathleen ni Houlihan" was first seen during 1904, with Miss Margaret Wycherly in the leading rôle. In fact to that actress America owes its early introduction to the Irish Theatre.

In the study of William Butler Yeats one has to understand his dramatic theory and his interest in different aspects of the poetic drama. His prose writings are the source of such information. In "The Cutting of an Agate" we have his laws of the theatre. In his "Advice to Playwrights Who Are Sending Plays to the Abbey, Dublin", contained in his "Ideas of Good and Evil", we are given first-hand his policies governing the running of the theatre — policies more fully outlined in his little magazines. In his collected poetic works, a statement of principles concerning the National Theatre Society will likewise be suggestive. You will find as much of Yeats in his essays on Synge and in his critical judgments of William Blake as you will of Synge and Blake themselves. In fact, no man writing for the Irish Theatre is quite so personal, so autobiographical, so dependent upon personal experience as is Yeats himself. Lady Gregory and Synge might depend on environment and event, but in the writing of their plays they are more apt to dissociate themselves from the material with which they are dealing. Filmy and beautiful in texture, highly sensitive and rich in imagination, the Yeats plays, or at least some of them, will be seen wherever Irish plays are given. But as permanent theatre contributions, they are not as high examples of dramaturgy as are the few one-act plays written by Synge.

CATHLEEN NI HOULIHAN

By W. B. YEATS

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CHARACTERS

Peter Gillane	
Michael Gillane	*his son, going to be married*
Patrick Gillane	*a lad of twelve, Michael's brother*
Bridget Gillane	*Peter's wife*
Delia Cahel	*engaged to Michael*
The Poor Old Woman	
Neighbours	

CATHLEEN NI HOULIHAN

SCENE. — *Interior of a cottage close to Killala, in 1798.* BRIDGET *is standing at a table undoing a parcel.* PETER *is sitting at one side of the fire,* PATRICK *at the other*

PETER. What is that sound I hear?

PATRICK. I don't hear anything. [*He listens*] I hear it now. It's like cheering. [*He goes to the window and looks out*] I wonder what they are cheering about. I don't see anybody.

PETER. It might be a hurling match.

PATRICK. There's no hurling to-day. It must be down in the town the cheering is.

BRIDGET. I suppose the boys must be having some sport of their own. Come over here, Peter, and look at Michael's wedding-clothes.

PETER [*shifts his chair to table*]. Those are grand clothes, indeed.

BRIDGET. You hadn't clothes like that when you married me, and no coat to put on of a Sunday any more than any other day.

PETER. That is true, indeed. We never thought a son of our own would be wearing a suit of that sort for his wedding, or have so good a place to bring a wife to.

PATRICK [*who is still at the window*]. There's an old woman coming down the road. I don't know, is it here she's coming?

BRIDGET. It will be a neighbour coming to hear about Michael's wedding. Can you see who it is?

PATRICK. I think it is a stranger, but she's not coming to the house. She's turned into the gap that goes down where Murteen and his sons are shearing sheep. [*He turns towards* BRIDGET] Do you remember what Winny of the Cross Roads was saying the other night about the strange woman that goes through the country whatever time there's war or trouble coming?

BRIDGET. Don't be bothering us about Winny's talk, but go and open the door for your brother. I hear him coming up the path.

PETER. I hope he has brought Delia's fortune with him safe, for fear her people might go back on the bargain and I after making it. Trouble enough I had making it.

[PATRICK *opens the door and* MICHAEL *comes in*]

BRIDGET. What kept you, Michael? We were looking out for you this long time.

MICHAEL. I went round by the priest's house to bid him be ready to marry us to-morrow.

BRIDGET. Did he say anything?

MICHAEL. He said it was a very nice match, and that he was never better pleased to marry any two in his parish than myself and Delia Cahel.

PETER. Have you got the fortune, Michael?

MICHAEL. Here it is.

[*He puts bag on table and goes over and leans against the chimney-jamb.* BRIDGET, *who has been all this time examining the clothes, pulling the seams and trying the lining of the pockets, etc., puts the clothes on the dresser*]

PETER [*getting up and taking the bag in his hand and turning out the money*]. Yes, I made the bargain well for you, Michael. Old John Cahel would sooner have kept a share of this awhile longer. "Let me keep the half of it till the first boy is born," says he. "You will not," says I. "Whether there is or is not a boy, the whole hundred pounds must be in Michael's hands before he brings your daughter in the house." The wife spoke to him then, and he gave in at the end.

BRIDGET. You seem well pleased to be handling the money, Peter.

PETER. Indeed, I wish I had had the luck to get a hundred pounds, or twenty pounds itself, with the wife I married.

BRIDGET. Well, if I didn't bring

much I didn't get much. What had you the day I married you but a flock of hens and you feeding them, and a few lambs and you driving them to the market at Ballina? [*She is vexed and bangs a jug on the dresser*] If I brought no fortune, I worked it out in my bones, laying down the baby, Michael that is standing there now, on a stook of straw, while I dug the potatoes, and never asking big dresses or anything but to be working.

PETER. That is true, indeed.

[*He pats her arm*]

BRIDGET. Leave me alone now till I ready the house for the woman that is to come into it.

PETER. You are the best woman in Ireland, but money is good, too. [*He begins handling the money again and sits down*] I never thought to see so much money within my four walls. We can do great things now we have it. We can take the ten acres of land we have a chance of since Jamsie Dempsey died, and stock it. We will go to the fair of Ballina to buy the stock. Did Delia ask any of the money for her own use, Michael?

MICHAEL. She did not, indeed. She did not seem to take much notice of it, or to look at it at all.

BRIDGET. That's no wonder. Why would she look at it when she had yourself to look at, a fine, strong young man? It is proud she must be to get you, a good steady boy that will make use of the money, and not be running through it or spending it on drink like another.

PETER. It's likely Michael himself was not thinking much of the fortune either, but of what sort the girl was to look at.

MICHAEL [*coming over towards the table*]. Well, you would like a nice comely girl to be beside you, and to go walking with you. The fortune only lasts for a while, but the woman will be there always. [*Cheers*]

PATRICK [*turning round from the window*]. They are cheering again down in the town. Maybe they are landing horses from Enniscrone. They do be cheering when the horses take the water well.

MICHAEL. There are no horses in it. Where would they be going and no fair at hand? Go down to the town, Patrick, and see what is going on.

PATRICK [*opens the door to go out, but stops for a moment on the threshold*]. Will Delia remember, do you think, to bring the greyhound pup she promised me when she would be coming to the house?

MICHAEL. She will surely.

[PATRICK *goes out, leaving the door open*]

PETER. It will be Patrick's turn next to be looking for a fortune, but he won't find it so easy to get it and he with no place of his own.

BRIDGET. I do be thinking sometimes, now things are going so well with us, and the Cahels such a good back to us in the district, and Delia's own uncle a priest, we might be put in the way of making Patrick a priest some day, and he so good at his books.

PETER. Time enough, time enough; you have always your head full of plans, Bridget.

BRIDGET. We will be well able to give him learning, and not to send him trampling the country like a poor scholar that lives on charity. [*Cheers*]

MICHAEL. They're not done cheering yet.

[*He goes over to the door and stands there for a moment, putting up his hand to shade his eyes*]

BRIDGET. Do you see anything?

MICHAEL. I see an old woman coming up the path.

BRIDGET. Who is it, I wonder. It must be the strange woman Patrick saw awhile ago.

MICHAEL. I don't think it's one of the neighbours anyway, but she has her cloak over her face.

BRIDGET. It might be some poor woman heard we were making ready for the wedding and came to look for her share.

PETER. I may as well put the money out of sight. There is no use leaving it out for every stranger to look at.

[*He goes over to a large box in the corner, opens it, and puts the bag in and fumbles at the lock*]

MICHAEL. There she is, father! [*An* OLD WOMAN *passes the window slowly; she looks at* MICHAEL *as she passes*] I'd sooner a stranger not to come to the house the night before my wedding.

BRIDGET. Open the door, Michael; don't keep the poor woman waiting.

[*The* OLD WOMAN *comes in.* MICHAEL *stands aside to make way for her*]

OLD WOMAN. God save all here!

PETER. God save you kindly!

OLD WOMAN. You have good shelter here.

PETER. You are welcome to whatever shelter we have.

BRIDGET. Sit down there by the fire and welcome.

OLD WOMAN [*warming her hands*]. There is a hard wind outside.

[MICHAEL *watches her curiously from the door.* PETER *comes over to the table*]

PETER. Have you travelled far today?

OLD WOMAN. I have travelled far, very far; there are few have travelled so far as myself, and there's many a one that doesn't make me welcome. There was one that had strong sons I thought were friends of mine, but they were shearing their sheep, and they wouldn't listen to me.

PETER. It's a pity indeed for any person to have no place of their own.

OLD WOMAN. That's true for you indeed, and it's long I'm on the roads since I first went wandering.

BRIDGET. It is a wonder you are not worn out with so much wandering.

OLD WOMAN. Sometimes my feet are tired and my hands are quiet, but there is no quiet in my heart. When the people see me quiet, they think old age has come on me and that all the stir has gone out of me. But when the trouble is on me I must be talking to my friends.

BRIDGET. What was it put you wandering?

OLD WOMAN. Too many strangers in the house.

BRIDGET. Indeed you look as if you'd had your share of trouble.

OLD WOMAN. I have had trouble indeed.

BRIDGET. What was it put the trouble on you?

OLD WOMAN. My land that was taken from me.

PETER. Was it much land they took from you?

OLD WOMAN. My four beautiful green fields.

PETER. [*Aside to* BRIDGET] Do you think could she be the widow Casey that was put out of her holding at Kilglass awhile ago?

BRIDGET. She is not. I saw the widow Casey one time at the market in Ballina, a stout fresh woman.

PETER. [*To* OLD WOMAN] Did you hear a noise of cheering, and you coming up the hill?

OLD WOMAN. I thought I heard the noise I used to hear when my friends came to visit me.

[*She begins singing half to herself*]

I will go cry with the woman,
For yellow-haired Donough is dead,
With a hempen rope for a neckcloth,
And a white cloth on his head,—

MICHAEL [*coming from the door*]. What is that you are singing, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. Singing I am about a man I knew one time, yellow-haired Donough, that was hanged in Galway.

[*She goes on singing, much louder*]

I am come to cry with you, woman,
My hair is unwound and unbound;
I remember him ploughing his field,
Turning up the red side of the ground,

And building his barn on the hill
With the good mortared stone;
O! we'd have pulled down the gallows
Had it happened in Enniscrone!

MICHAEL. What was it brought him to his death?

OLD WOMAN. He died for love of me: many a man has died for love of me.

PETER. [*Aside to* BRIDGET] Her trouble has put her wits astray.

MICHAEL. Is it long since that song was made? Is it long since he got his death?

OLD WOMAN. Not long, not long. But there were others that died for love of me a long time ago.

MICHAEL. Were they neighbours of your own, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. Come here beside me and I'll tell you about them. [MICHAEL *sits down beside her at the hearth*] There was a red man of the O'Donnells from the north, and a man of the O'Sullivans from the south, and there was one Brian that lost his life at Clontarf by the sea, and there were a great many in the west, some that died hundreds of years ago, and there are some that will die to-morrow.

MICHAEL. Is it in the west that men will die to-morrow?

OLD WOMAN. Come nearer, nearer to me.

BRIDGET. Is she right, do you think? Or is she a woman from beyond the world?

PETER. She doesn't know well what she's talking about, with the want and the trouble she has gone through.

BRIDGET. The poor thing, we should treat her well.

PETER. Give her a drink of milk and a bit of the oaten cake.

BRIDGET. Maybe we should give her something along with that, to bring her on her way. A few pence, or a shilling itself, and we with so much money in the house.

PETER. Indeed I'd not begrudge it to her if we had it to spare, but if we go running through what we have, we'll soon have to break the hundred pounds, and that would be a pity.

BRIDGET. Shame on you, Peter. Give her the shilling, and your blessing with it, or our own luck will go from us.

[PETER *goes to the box and takes out a shilling*]

BRIDGET. [*To the* OLD WOMAN] Will you have a drink of milk?

OLD WOMAN. It is not food or drink that I want.

PETER [*offering the shilling*]. Here is something for you.

OLD WOMAN. That is not what I want. It is not silver I want.

PETER. What is it you would be asking for?

OLD WOMAN. If anyone would give me help he must give me himself, he must give me all.

[PETER *goes over to the table, staring at the shilling in his hand in a bewildered way, and stands whispering to* BRIDGET]

MICHAEL. Have you no one to care you in your age, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. I have not. With all the lovers that brought me their love, I never set out the bed for any.

MICHAEL. Are you lonely going the roads, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. I have my thoughts and I have my hopes.

MICHAEL. What hopes have you to hold to?

OLD WOMAN. The hope of getting my beautiful fields back again; the hope of putting the strangers out of my house.

MICHAEL. What way will you do that, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN. I have good friends that will help me. They are gathering to help me now. I am not afraid. If they are put down to-day, they will get the upper hand to-morrow. [*She gets up*] I must be going to meet my friends. They are coming to help me, and I must be there to welcome them. I must call the neighbours together to welcome them.

MICHAEL. I will go with you.

BRIDGET. It is not her friends you have to go and welcome, Michael; it is the girl coming into the house you have to welcome. You have plenty to do, it is food and drink you have to bring to the house. The woman that is coming home is not coming with empty hands; you would not have an empty house before her. [*To the* OLD WOMAN] Maybe you don't know, ma'am, that my son is going to be married to-morrow.

OLD WOMAN. It is not a man going to his marriage that I look to for help.

PETER. [*To* BRIDGET] Who is she, do you think, at all?

BRIDGET. You did not tell us your name yet, ma'am.

OLD WOMAN. Some call me the Poor Old Woman, and there are some that call me Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

PETER. I think I knew someone of that name once. Who was it, I wonder? It must have been someone I knew when I was a boy. No, no, I remember, I heard it in a song.

OLD WOMAN [*who is standing in the doorway*]. They are wondering that there were songs made for me; there have been many songs made for me. I heard one on the wind this morning.

[*She sings*]

Do not make a great keening
When the graves have been dug to-morrow.
Do not call the white-scarfed riders
To the burying that shall be to-morrow.

Do not spread food to call strangers
To the wakes that shall be to-morrow;
Do not give money for prayers
For the dead that shall die to-morrow . . .

they will have no need of prayers, they will have no need of prayers.

MICHAEL. I do not know what that song means, but tell me something I can do for you.

PETER. Come over to me, Michael.

MICHAEL. Hush, father, listen to her.

OLD WOMAN. It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets

in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born, and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that had red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake; and for all that, they will think they are well paid.

[*She goes out; her voice is heard outside singing*]

They shall be remembered for ever,
They shall be alive for ever,
They shall be speaking for ever,
The people shall hear them for ever.

BRIDGET. [*To* PETER] Look at him, Peter; he has the look of a man that has got the touch. [*Raising her voice*] Look here, Michael, at the wedding-clothes. Such grand clothes as these are. You have a right to fit them on now; it would be a pity to-morrow if they did not fit. The boys would be laughing at you. Take them, Michael, and go into the room and fit them on.

[*She puts them on his arm*]

MICHAEL. What wedding are you talking of? What clothes will I be wearing to-morrow?

BRIDGET. These are the clothes you are going to wear when you marry Delia Cahel to-morrow.

MICHAEL. I had forgotten that.

[*He looks at the clothes and turns towards the inner room, but stops at the sound of cheering outside*]

PETER. There is the shouting come to our own door. What is it has happened?

[PATRICK *and* DELIA *come in*]

PATRICK. There are ships in the Bay; the French are landing at Killala!

[PETER *takes his pipe from his mouth and his hat off, and stands up. The clothes slip from* MICHAEL'S *arm*]

DELIA. Michael! [*He takes no notice*] Michael! [*He turns towards her*] Why do you look at me like a stranger?

[*She drops his arm.* BRIDGET *goes over towards her*]

PATRICK. The boys are all hurrying down the hillsides to join the French.

DELIA. Michael won't be going to join the French.

BRIDGET. [*To* PETER] Tell him not to go, Peter.

PETER. It's no use. He doesn't hear a word we're saying.

BRIDGET. Try and coax him over to the fire.

DELIA. Michael! Michael! You won't leave me! You won't join the French, and we going to be married!

[*She puts her arms about him; he turns towards her as if about to yield.* OLD WOMAN'S *voice outside*]

They shall be speaking for ever,
The people shall hear them for ever.

[MICHAEL *breaks away from* DELIA *and goes out*]

PETER. [*To* PATRICK, *laying a hand on his arm*] Did you see an old woman going down the path?

PATRICK. I did not, but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen.

THE WORKHOUSE WARD

(1908)

By Lady Gregory

LADY GREGORY

It was a year and three months after the War began that Lady Augusta Gregory paid her first visit to America since the tour of the Irish Players through the United States. I emphasize this date because, in the interim between the two American trips, a change had come over Lady Gregory, with whom I had had the pleasure of many conversations. This change, it might be inferred, was due to the influence of many minds upon the Irish temperament during its successful tour of the United States when, on all sides, the Irish Theatre was criticized for its narrow parochialism and for its too insistent self-interest.

I am quoting some of the opinions expressed to me by Lady Gregory, in 1915, because they will emphasize certain facts regarding the Irish Theatre, and will call attention to certain spiritual changes in the Irish playwrights which may have a very profound effect upon the Celtic renaissance after the War is over.

It would seem that in the five years between January 1, 1911, and November, 1915, Lady Gregory has grown much sounder in her nationalism, building in her own imagination a larger destiny for Ireland than one would infer to be the destiny in the minds of most of the members of the Irish Theatre on their visit to America in 1911.

Take, for instance, her notions regarding the influence of art on the Irish nation. She said:

> Sir Hugh Lane, my nephew, lost his life on the *Lusitania*. He was a director, at that time, of the National Gallery of Ireland, and he made the National Gallery his heir. Some of his finest pictures, the Titian of Baldassari, the great Rembrandt Portrait of a Woman, and a wonderful Goya, were turned over immediately to the nation. While it is popularly thought that he took away from the collection many modern French pictures, and bequeathed them to the National Gallery of England, a codicil to his will shows that he had revoked this bequest and given the collection to Dublin on condition that a gallery be especially built for it within five years. If Dublin comes into possession of the numerous Manets, Renoirs, Courbets, and Rousseaus, then Dublin will become in a day one of the chief art centres of Europe.

This is a broader reaching out of Ireland to compete with the rest of the world, and competition means interest in what one's neighbours are doing. Yet, despite this awakening to a world position, Lady Gregory will not relinquish her hold upon local condition.

> Remember, [she declared] I am for parochialism in art. I preached it on my previous visit to this country when I was speaking of an American National Theatre. I often quote Whitman who believed in looking, not far off, but close at hand; there we find the best that is in us. Turgenieff once said, "Russia can do without you; but you cannot do without Russia."

I wrote "The Workhouse Ward" for three of our players who had, for various reasons, left our country. They were to strike out for themselves. They refused my manuscript because they said that it was too local, yet I find now that of all my plays it is the one most popular in America. I have met charming young ladies at the different universities, and they have told me how much they have enjoyed giving performances of my plays. And when I have felt flattered and hoped they would praise my more idealistic pieces, I was invariably told that the play they liked most was "The Workhouse Ward."

If it was so local, as some have said, would it have that widespread interest?

There was an Irish poet who wrote Irish songs, a hundred years ago, and people used to say that he was a man who could stand at his own back door and speak of, for, and to, the four corners of the globe. Really, what we are after is human nature, and human nature is not very far off. We Irish may be a little too intent in our local problems. We are never always right. The Irish themselves see that there is much folly at times in their attitude; and yet, at the back of their attitude, there is something of a very large and very ancient patriotism. And I believe that such a patriotism is better than English trades-unionism, where members think more of the wages they are going to receive than of the country they should serve. The fortunate thing with us is that we have a deep feeling within us — idealism, let us call it — which no criticism from the outside can touch. And it is this idealism which makes our literary work take on a quality of universality. I do not believe that the local touches in our one-act plays make us parochial in the sense that they make our plays aloof from life in general.

I am over here lecturing on "Laughter in Ireland." But I find that this is just the one quality not to be found in Ireland. If you examine Gaelic songs, you will note that they contain religious, political, even drinking sentiments, but there is nothing comic in them. It was after the legislative union with England that an English-speaking public came in; then Lovell wrote for them especially his tales of the blundering Irish servant, and Lever came to the fore with his false characters, and there arose a stream of Irish jokes, crystallizing into a comic impression of Irish character. It was an artificial creation, not true to life, but still the English people got into the habit of measuring Ireland through Irish jokes. The irony of it all is this: that twenty years ago a school of Irish satirists arose, represented at their highest by Bernard Shaw, and so well represented in America by your Mr. Dooley: and though the English people do not like the jokes of the Irish satirists, this habit of theirs to laugh at the Irish cannot now be stopped, and so they are laughing at their own expense!

I really believe that one of the most distinct contributions of our Irish theatre has been that the largest output of our Irish humour has come in the plays of the young dramatists who gathered about our standard. The plays we have presented have served as a twofold purpose, and here it is that our parochialism stretches beyond our borders into a criticism of life in general. Ever ready to laugh at ourselves, we are as well laughing at human nature, like Molière.

This laughter is rich in character and so the spiritual point of view becomes universal. You may accuse us of narrowness, but when we interpret our parochialism in this broad way, where is our narrowness then?

This conversation is worth while quoting in full because it represents a less emotional attitude toward art than that expressed by Yeats.

It is doubtful whether we would know as much of Gaelic romance were it not for the thoroughness with which Lady Gregory has reproduced for us the "Cuchulain of Muirthemne" (1902), "Gods and Fighting Men" (1904), and "Book of Saints and Sinners" (1908). In addition to which she has, likewise, produced "The Kiltartan Wonder Book" and "The Kiltartan History Book" (1910). As a translator, she has given us the "Kiltartan Molière" and versions of Sudermann and Goldoni. Those who would follow the dramatic career of Lady Gregory have five volumes of plays to turn to: "Seven Short Plays" (1909), "The Image" (1910), "New Comedies" (1913), and two collections of "Irish Folk History Tales" (1912). The first of the later comedies, written for the Irish Players, which followed her serious attempt in "Twenty-five", during 1903, was "Spreading the News." An analysis of these plays, most of which formed part of the Irish repertory when the Players visited America, shows them marked by innate humour and based on typical situations of Irish character. For our present purpose, we have selected "The Workhouse Ward" because of its representative Irish character.

In her "Our Irish Theatre" is the following biographical account of "The Workhouse Ward":

> As to "The Poorhouse", the idea came from a visit to Gort Workhouse one day when I heard that the wife of an old man, who had been long there, maimed by something, a knife I think, that she had thrown at him in a quarrel, had herself now been brought into the hospital. I wondered how they would meet, as enemies or as friends, and I thought it likely they would be glad to end their days together for old sake's sake. This is how I wrote down my fable: "Scene, ward of a workhouse; two beds containing the old men; they are quarrelling. Occupants of other invisible beds are heard saying, 'There they are at it again; they are always quarrelling.' They say the matron will be coming to call for order, but another says the matron has been sent for to see somebody who wants to remove one of the paupers. Both old men wish they could be removed from each other and have the whole ridge of the world between them. The fight goes on. One old man tells the other that he remembers the time he used to be stealing ducks, and he a boy at school. The other old man remembers the time his neighbour was suspected of going to Souper's school, etc., etc. They remember the crimes of each other's lives. They fight like two young whelps that go on fighting till they are two old dogs. At last they take their pillows and throw them at each other. Other paupers (invisible) cheer and applaud. Then they take their porringers, pipes, prayer-books, or whatever is in reach, to hurl at each other. They lament the hard fate that has put them in the same ward for five years and in beds next each other for the last three months, and they after being enemies the whole of their lives. Suddenly a cry that the matron is coming. They settle themselves hurriedly. Each puts his enemy's pillow under his head and lies down. The matron comes in with a countrywoman comfortably dressed. She embraces one old man. She is his sister. Her husband died from her lately and she is lonesome and doesn't like to think of her brother being in the workhouse. If he is bedridden itself, he would be company for her. He is delighted, asks what sort of house she has. She says, a good one, a nice kitchen, and he can be doing little jobs for her. He can be sitting in a chair beside the fire and stirring the stirabout for her and throwing a bit of food to the chickens when she is out in the field.

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He asks when he can go. She says she has the chance of a lift for him on a neighbour's cart. He can come at once. He says he will make no delay. A loud sob from the old man in the other bed. He says, 'Is it going away you are, you that I knew through all my lifetime, and leaving me among strangers?' The first old man asks his sister if she will bring him too. She is indignant, says she won't. First old man says maybe he'd be foolish to go at all. How does he know if he'd like it. She says, he is to please himself; if he doesn't come, she can easily get a husband, having, as she has, a nice way of living, and three lambs going to the next market. The first man says, well, he won't go; if she would bring the other old man, he would go. She turns her back angrily. Paupers in other beds call out she'll find a good husband amongst them. She pulls on her shawl scornfully to go away. She gives her brother one more chance; he says he won't go. She says good-bye and bad luck to him. She leaves. He says that man beyond would be lonesome with no one to contradict him. The other man says he would not. The first man says, 'You want some one to be arguing with you always.' The second man, 'I do not.' The first man says, 'You are at your lies again.' The second takes up his pillow to heave at him again. Curtain falls on two men arming themselves with pillows."

I intended to write the full dialogue myself, but Mr. Yeats thought a new Gaelic play more useful for the moment, and rather sadly I laid that part of the work upon Dr. Hyde. It was all for the best in the end, for the little play, when we put it on at the Abbey, did not go very well. It seemed to ravel out into loose ends, and we did not repeat it; nor did the Gaelic players like it as well as "The Marriage" and "The Lost Saint." After a while, when the Fays had left us, I wanted a play that would be useful to them, and with Dr. Hyde's full leave I re-wrote the "Poorhouse" as "The Workhouse Ward." I had more skill by that time, and it was a complete re-writing, for the two old men in the first play had been talking at an imaginary audience of other old men in the ward. When this was done away with the dialogue became of necessity more closely knit, more direct and personal, to the great advantage of the play, although it was rejected as "too local" by the players for whom I had written it. The success of this set me to cutting down the number of parts in later plays until I wrote "Grania" with only three persons in it, and "The Bogie Men" with only two. I may have gone too far, and have, I think, given up an intention I at one time had of writing a play for a man and a scarecrow only, but one has to go on with experiment or interest in creation fades, at least so it is with me.

If, as some believe, each play contains a symbol, Lady Gregory has furnished one for "The Workhouse Ward" in her notes:

I sometimes think the two scolding paupers are a symbol of ourselves in Ireland. . . . "It is better to be quarrelling than to be lonesome." The Rajputs, that great fighting race, when they were told they had been brought under the Pax Britannica and must give up war, gave themselves to opium in its place, but Connacht has not yet planted its poppy gardens.

THE WORKHOUSE WARD

BY LADY GREGORY

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CHARACTERS

"The Workhouse Ward" was first produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on April 20th, 1908, with the following cast:

MIKE McINERNEY	*Paupers*	Arthur Sinclair
MICHAEL MISKELL	*Paupers*	Fred O'Donovan
MRS. DONOHOE	*A Countrywoman*	Marie O'Neil

THE WORKHOUSE WARD

SCENE. — *A ward in Cloon Workhouse. The two old men in their beds.*

MICHAEL MISKELL. Isn't it a hard case, Mike McInerney, myself and yourself to be left here in the bed, and it the feast day of Saint Colman, and the rest of the ward attending on the Mass.

MIKE MCINERNEY. Is it sitting up by the hearth you are wishful to be, Michael Miskell, with cold in the shoulders and with speckled shins? Let you rise up so, and you well able to do it, not like myself that has pains the same as tin-tacks within in my inside.

MICHAEL MISKELL. If you have pains within in your inside there is no one can see it or know of it the way they can see my own knees that are swelled up with the rheumatism, and my hands that are twisted in ridges the same as an old cabbage stalk. It is easy to be talking about soreness and about pains, and they maybe not to be in it at all.

MIKE MCINERNEY. To open me and to analyse me you would know what sort of a pain and a soreness I have in my heart and in my chest. But I'm not one like yourself to be cursing and praying and tormenting the time the nuns are at hand, thinking to get a bigger share than myself of the nourishment and of the milk.

MICHAEL MISKELL. That's the way you do be picking at me and faulting me. I had a share and a good share in my early time, and it's well you know that, and the both of us reared in Skehanagh.

MIKE MCINERNEY. You may say that, indeed, we are both of us reared in Skehanagh. Little wonder you to have good nourishment the time we were both rising, and you bringing away my rabbits out of the snare.

MICHAEL MISKELL. And you didn't bring away my own eels, I suppose, I was after spearing in the Turlough? Selling them to the nuns in the convent you did, and letting on they to be your own. For you were always a cheater and a schemer, grabbing every earthly thing for your own profit.

MIKE MCINERNEY. And you were no grabber yourself, I suppose, till your land and all you had grabbed wore away from you!

MICHAEL MISKELL. If I lost it itself, it was through the crosses I met with and I going through the world. I never was a rambler and a cardplayer like yourself, Mike McInerney, that ran through all and lavished it unknown to your mother!

MIKE MCINERNEY. Lavished it, is it? And if I did was it you yourself led me to lavish it or some other one? It is on my own floor I would be to-day and in the face of my family, but for the misfortune I had to be put with a bad next door neighbour that was yourself. What way did my means go from me is it? Spending on fencing, spending on walls, making up gates, putting up doors, that would keep your hens and your ducks from coming in through starvation on my floor, and every four-footed beast you had from preying and trespassing on my oats and my mangolds and my little lock of hay!

MICHAEL MISKELL. O to listen to you! And I striving to please you and to be kind to you and to close my ears to the abuse you would be calling and letting out of your mouth. To trespass on your crops is it? It's little temptation there was for my poor beasts to ask to cross the mering. My God Almighty! What had you but a little corner of a field!

MIKE MCINERNEY. And what do you say to my garden that your two pigs had destroyed on me the year of the big tree being knocked, and they making gaps in the wall.

MICHAEL MISKELL. Ah, there does be a great deal of gaps knocked in a twelvemonth. Why wouldn't they be

knocked by the thunder, the same as the tree, or some storm that came up from the west?

MIKE MCINERNEY. It was the west wind, I suppose, that devoured my green cabbage? And that rooted up my Champion potatoes? And that ate the gooseberries themselves from off the bush?

MICHAEL MISKELL. What are you saying? The two quietest pigs ever I had, no way wicked and well ringed. They were not ten minutes in it. It would be hard for them eat strawberries in that time, let alone gooseberries that's full of thorns.

MIKE MCINERNEY. They were not quiet, but very ravenous pigs you had that time, as active as a fox they were, killing my young ducks. Once they had blood tasted you couldn't stop them.

MICHAEL MISKELL. And what happened myself the fair day of Esserkelly, the time I was passing your door? Two brazened dogs that rushed out and took a piece of me. I never was the better of it or of the start I got, but wasting from then till now!

MIKE MCINERNEY. Thinking you were a wild beast they did, that had made his escape out of the travelling show, with the red eyes of you and the ugly face of you, and the two crooked legs of you that wouldn't hardly stop a pig in a gap. Sure any dog that had any life in it at all would be roused and stirred seeing the like of you going the road!

MICHAEL MISKELL. I did well taking out a summons against you that time. It is a great wonder you not to have been bound over through your lifetime, but the laws of England is queer.

MIKE MCINERNEY. What ailed me that I did not summons yourself after you stealing away the clutch of eggs I had in the barrel, and I away in Ardrahan searching out a clocking hen.

MICHAEL MISKELL. To steal your eggs is it? Is that what you are saying now? [*Holds up his hands*] The Lord is in heaven, and Peter and the saints, and yourself that was in Ardrahan that day put a hand on them as soon as myself! Isn't it a bad story for me to be wearing out my days beside you the same as a spancelled goat. Chained I am and tethered I am to a man that is ramsacking his mind for lies!

MIKE MCINERNEY. If it is a bad story for you, Michael Miskell, it is a worse story again for myself. A Miskell to be next and near me through the whole of the four quarters of the year. I never heard there to be any great name on the Miskells as there was on my own race and name.

MICHAEL MISKELL. You didn't, is it? Well, you could hear it if you had but ears to hear it. Go across to Lisheen Crannagh and down to the sea and to Newtown Lynch and the mills of Duras and you'll find a Miskell, and as far as Dublin!

MIKE MCINERNEY. What signifies Crannagh and the mills of Duras? Look at all my own generations that are buried at the Seven Churches. And how many generations of the Miskells are buried in it? Answer me that!

MICHAEL MISKELL. I tell you but for the wheat that was to be sowed there would be more side cars and more common cars at my father's funeral (God rest his soul!) than at any funeral ever left your own door. And as to my mother, she was a Cuffe from Claregalway, and it's she had the purer blood!

MIKE MCINERNEY. And what do you say to the banshee? Isn't she apt to have knowledge of the ancient race? Was ever she heard to screech or to cry for the Miskells? Or for the Cuffes from Claregalway? She was not, but for the six families, the Hyneses, the Foxes, the Faheys, the Dooleys, the McInerneys. It is of the nature of the McInerneys she is I am thinking, crying them the same as a king's children.

MICHAEL MISKELL. It is a pity the banshee not to be crying for yourself at this minute, and giving you a warning to quit your lies and your chat and your arguing and your contrary ways; for there is no one under the rising sun could stand you. I tell you you are not behaving as in the presence of the Lord!

MIKE MCINERNEY. Is it wishful for my death you are? Let it come and meet me now and welcome so long as it will part me from yourself! And I say, and I would kiss the book on it, I to have one request only to be granted, and I leaving it in my will, it is what I would request, nine furrows of the field, nine ridges of the hills, nine waves of the ocean to be put between your grave and my own grave the time we will be laid in the ground!

Michael Miskell. Amen to that! Nine ridges, is it? No, but let the whole ridge of the world separate us till the Day of Judgment! I would not be laid anear you at the Seven Churches, I to get Ireland without a divide!

Mike McInerney. And after that again! I'd sooner than ten pound in my hand, I to know that my shadow and my ghost will not be knocking about with your shadow and your ghost, and the both of us waiting our time. I'd sooner be delayed in Purgatory! Now, have you anything to say?

Michael Miskell. I have everything to say, if I had but the time to say it!

Mike McInerney [*sitting up*]. Let me up out of this till I'll choke you!

Michael Miskell. · You scolding pauper you!

Mike McInerney [*shaking his fist at him*]. Wait a while!

Michael Miskell [*shaking his fist*]. Wait a while yourself!

[Mrs. Donohoe *comes in with a parcel. She is a countrywoman with a frilled cap and a shawl. She stands still a minute. The two old men lie down and compose themselves*]

Mrs. Donohoe. They bade me come up here by the stair. I never was in this place at all. I don't know am I right. Which now of the two of ye is Mike McInerney?

Mike McInerney. Who is it is calling me by my name?

Mrs. Donohoe. Sure amn't I your sister, Honor McInerney that was, that is now Honor Donohoe.

Mike McInerney. So you are, I believe. I didn't know you till you pushed anear me. It is time indeed for you to come see me, and I in this place five year or more. Thinking me to be no credit to you, I suppose, among that tribe of the Donohoes. I wonder they to give you leave to come ask am I living yet or dead?

Mrs. Donohoe. Ah, sure, I buried the whole string of them. Himself was the last to go. [*Wipes her eyes*] The Lord be praised he got a fine natural death. Sure we must go through our crosses. And he got a lovely funeral; it would delight you to hear the priest reading the Mass. My poor John Donohoe! A nice clean man, you couldn't but be fond of him. Very severe on the tobacco he was, but he wouldn't touch the drink.

Mike McInerney. And is it in Curranroe you are living yet?

Mrs. Donohoe. It is so. He left all to myself. But it is a lonesome thing the head of a house to have died!

Mike McInerney. I hope that he has left you a nice way of living?

Mrs. Donohoe. Fair enough, fair enough. A wide lovely house I have; a few acres of grass land . . . the grass does be very sweet that grows among the stones. And as to the sea, there is something from it every day of the year, a handful of periwinkles to make kitchen, or cockles maybe. There is many a thing in the sea is not decent, but cockles is fit to put before the Lord!

Mike McInerney. You have all that! And you without ere a man in the house?

Mrs. Donohoe. It is what I am thinking, yourself might come and keep me company. It is no credit to me a brother of my own to be in this place at all.

Mike McInerney. I'll go with you! Let me out of this! It is the name of the McInerneys will be rising on every side!

Mrs. Donohoe. I don't know. I was ignorant of you being kept to the bed.

Mike McInerney. I am not kept to it, but maybe an odd time when there is a colic rises up within me. My stomach always gets better the time there is a change in the moon. I'd like well to draw anear you. My heavy blessing on you, Honor Donohoe, for the hand you have held out to me this day.

Mrs. Donohoe. Sure you could be keeping the fire in, and stirring the pot with the bit of Indian meal for the hens, and milking the goat and taking the tacklings off the donkey at the door; and maybe putting out the cabbage plants in their time. For when the old man died the garden died.

Mike McInerney. I could to be sure, and be cutting the potatoes for seed. What luck could there be in a place and a man not to be in it? Is that now a suit of clothes you have brought with you?

Mrs. Donohoe. It is so, the way you will be tasty coming in among the neighbours at Curranroe.

MIKE MCINERNEY. My joy you are! It is well you earned me! Let me up out of this! [*He sits up and spreads out the clothes and tries on coat*] That now is a good frieze coat . . . and a hat in the fashion . . .

[*He puts on hat*]

MICHAEL MISKELL [*alarmed*]. And is it going out of this you are, Mike McInerney?

MIKE MCINERNEY. Don't you hear I am going? To Curranroe I am going. Going I am to a place where I will get every good thing!

MICHAEL MISKELL. And is it to leave me here after you you will?

MIKE MCINERNEY [*in a rising chant*]. Every good thing! The goat and the kid are there, the sheep and the lamb are there, the cow does be running and she coming to be milked! Ploughing and seed sowing, blossom at Christmas time, the cuckoo speaking through the dark days of the year! Ah, what are you talking about? Wheat high in hedges, no talk about the rent! Salmon in the rivers as plenty as turf! Spending and getting and nothing scarce! Sport and pleasure, and music on the strings! Age will go from me and I will be young again. Geese and turkeys for the hundreds and drink for the whole world!

MICHAEL MISKELL. Ah, Mike, is it truth you are saying, you to go from me and to leave me with rude people and with townspeople, and with people of every parish in the union, and they having no respect for me or no wish for me at all!

MIKE MCINERNEY. Whist now and I'll leave you . . . my pipe [*hands it over*]; and I'll engage it is Honor Donohoe won't refuse to be sending you a few ounces of tobacco an odd time, and neighbours coming to the fair in November or in the month of May.

MICHAEL MISKELL. Ah, what signifies tobacco? All that I am craving is the talk. There to be no one at all to say out to whatever thought might be rising in my innate mind! To be lying here and no conversible person in it would be the abomination of misery!

MIKE MCINERNEY. Look now, Honor. . . . It is what I often heard said, two to be better than one. . . . Sure if you had an old trouser was full of holes . . . or a skirt . . . wouldn't you put another in under it that might be as tattered as itself, and the two of them together would make some sort of a decent show?

MRS. DONOHOE. Ah, what are you saying? There is no holes in that suit I brought you now, but as sound it is as the day I spun it for himself.

MIKE MCINERNEY. It is what I am thinking, Honor . . . I do be weak an odd time . . . any load I would carry, it preys upon my side . . . and this man does be weak an odd time with the swelling in his knees . . . but the two of us together it's not likely it is at the one time we would fail. Bring the both of us with you, Honor, and the height of the castle of luck on you, and the both of us together will make one good hardy man!

MRS. DONOHOE. I'd like my job! Is it queer in the head you are grown asking me to bring in a stranger off the road?

MICHAEL MISKELL. I am not, ma'am, but an old neighbour I am. If I had forecasted this asking I would have asked it myself. Michael Miskell I am, that was in the next house to you in Skehanagh!

MRS. DONOHOE. For pity's sake! Michael Miskell is it? That's worse again. Yourself and Mike that never left fighting and scolding and attacking one another! Sparring at one another like two young pups you were, and threatening one another after like two grown dogs!

MIKE MCINERNEY. All the quarrelling was ever in the place it was myself did it. Sure his anger rises fast and goes away like the wind. Bring him out with myself now, Honor Donohoe, and God bless you.

MRS. DONOHOE. Well, then, I will not bring him out, and I will not bring yourself out, and you not to learn better sense. Are you making yourself ready to come?

MIKE MCINERNEY. I am thinking, maybe . . . it is a mean thing for a man that is shivering into seventy years to go changing from place to place.

MRS. DONOHOE. Well, take your luck or leave it. All I asked was to save you from the hurt and the harm of the year.

MIKE MCINERNEY. Bring the both of us with you or I will not stir out of this.

MRS. DONOHOE. Give me back my fine suit so [*begins gathering up the*

clothes], till I'll go look for a man of my own!

MIKE MCINERNEY. Let you go so, as you are so unnatural and so disobliging, and look for some man of your own, God help him! For I will not go with you at all!

MRS. DONOHOE. It is too much time I lost with you, and dark night waiting to overtake me on the road. Let the two of you stop together, and the back of my hand to you. It is I will leave you there the same as God left the Jews!

[*She goes out. The old men lie down and are silent for a moment*]

MICHAEL MISKELL. Maybe the house is not so wide as what she says.

MIKE MCINERNEY. Why wouldn't it be wide?

MICHAEL MISKELL. Ah, there does be a good deal of middling poor houses down by the sea.

MIKE MCINERNEY. What would you know about wide houses? Whatever sort of a house you had yourself it was too wide for the provision you had into it.

MICHAEL MISKELL. Whatever provision I had in my house it was wholesome provision and natural provision. Herself and her periwinkles! Periwinkles is a hungry sort of food.

MIKE MCINERNEY. Stop your impudence and your chat or it will be the worse for you. I'd bear with my own father and mother as long as any man would, but if they'd vex me I would give them the length of a rope as soon as another!

MICHAEL MISKELL. I would never ask at all to go eating periwinkles.

MIKE MCINERNEY [*sitting up*]. Have you anyone to fight me?

MICHAEL MISKELL [*whimpering*]. I have not, only the Lord!

MIKE MCINERNEY. Let you leave putting insults on me so, and death picking at you!

MICHAEL MISKELL. Sure I am saying nothing at all to displease you. It is why I wouldn't go eating periwinkles, I'm in dread I might swallow the pin.

MIKE MCINERNEY. Who in the world wide is asking you to eat them? You're as tricky as a fish in the full tide!

MICHAEL MISKELL. Tricky is it! Oh, my curse and the curse of the four and twenty men upon you!

MIKE MCINERNEY. That the worm may chew you from skin to marrow bone! [*Seizes his pillow*]

MICHAEL MISKELL [*seizing his own pillow*]. I'll leave my death on you, you scheming bagabone!

MIKE MCINERNEY. By cripes! I'll pull out your pin feathers!

[*Throwing pillow*]

MICHAEL MISKELL [*throwing pillow*]. You tyrant! You big bully you!

MIKE MCINERNEY [*throwing pillow and seizing mug*]. Take this so, you stobbing ruffian you!

[*They throw all within their reach at one another, mugs, prayer books, pipes, etc.*]

[*Curtain*]

RIDERS TO THE SEA

(1904)

BY JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

(1871–1901)

There is something so personal about the career of Synge, his life seems to have been so full, and yet so unaccomplished in its work, that facts are lost in the detail of loving tribute. The contrasts in his activities are so violent and his accomplishment so many-sided, that his genius is the type enticing the biographer to research of the most intimate kind. To certain writers the task of recording the career of Synge is almost as consecrated as the task of the Stevenson lover who visits every shrine and locality with the hope of finding something new about his subject.

Synge was born in Newtown Little, near Rathfarnham, a suburb of Dublin, on April 16, 1871. He was educated in private schools, and between his fourteenth and seventeenth years had a tutor. Had one judged of his later career by his youthful tastes, one would have said that Synge was destined to be a naturalist. When he took up music and became more than proficient with the piano, the flute, and the violin, one would have said that he would continue his work and become a leading Irish composer. For, as late as 1891, while at Trinity College, he studied at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, easily obtaining a scholarship in harmony and counterpoint. In fact, after his graduation from Trinity, which he entered in 1888, studying under Doctor Traill, after taking all the honours he could in Hebrew and in Irish, he determined to practise music as a profession, and went to Germany for that purpose. But before 1894 came to an end, Synge had changed his plans and had determined to follow literature instead. This caused him to settle in Paris, in January, 1895. And from now on he spent much of his time between France and Ireland.

As a linguist, Synge was exceptionally proficient. Visiting Italy, in 1896, he studied Italian. And in 1897 he not only wrote prose and verse both in English and French, but he had planned a translation from the Italian of "The Little Flowers" of St. Francis of Assisi. His student nature never having deserted him, he planned for himself a comprehensive and exhaustive survey of Racine. It was in this mood that he met Yeats in 1899. Had it not been for this introduction, he probably would have continued his criticisms, and we would have had none of the exceptional plays which were to follow his visit to the Aran Islands in September, 1899. This visit was the beginning of a series of visits in 1900, 1901, and 1902. As a critic said:

> He took with him his fiddle, his conjuring tricks, his camera, and penny whistle, and feared that they would get tired of him if he brought them nothing new.

His notes, which he began to gather during his second stay, were completed in Paris, Dublin, and London, and were published in April, 1907.

Meanwhile, Synge had written two plays founded on stories he had heard in the

Aran Islands. One of these was entitled "The Shadow of the Glen" and the other "Riders to the Sea." As we have stated, Synge rode into reputation as a dramatist on the high wave of enthusiasm which was behind the establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre. "The Shadow of the Glen" was presented at Molesworth Hall, Dublin, on October 8, 1903, and "Riders to the Sea" at the same place, February 25, 1904.[1] After these there came "The Tinker's Wedding", which we are told was the first drama conceived by him, and begun in 1902, and "The Well of the Saints", written in 1903. During this winter of 1902–1903, Synge lived in London, and then as quickly changed his abode to Paris, and to the wilds of Wicklow and Kerry. He seems to have had a wandering fever, and his impressions of Wicklow and Kerry were published in the *Manchester Guardian*, and are contained in the fourth volume of his Works. In this fourth volume may likewise be seen impressions of Connemara, through which congested district Synge toured with Jack Yeats.

As one of the three literary advisers to the Abbey Theatre, Synge's tenure of office lasted from its opening until the day of his death. In February, 1905, a new play, "The Well of the Saints", was given, and in 1907 the famous "Playboy of the Western World."

The last year of his life was passed mostly in Dublin; he was busy re-writing "Deirdre of the Sorrows", unfinished at his death and published posthumously at Miss Yeats's Cuala Press. He died on March 24, 1909, at a private nursing home, and was buried in the family tomb in Dublin.

Lovers of Synge have eagerly scanned every poem and piece of prose of his that has been given for publication. His literary executors still have in their possession much valuable unpublished material, but we doubt whether anything they may hold in reserve will give us a fairer picture of Synge than that which, through the assiduous labours of Maurice Bourgeois, is contained in his volume of personal researches.

John Masefield, in his article for the Dictionary of National Biography, claims that Synge "brought into Irish literature the gifts of detachment from topic, and a wild vitality of tragedy."

There is no doubt that Synge's "The Shadow of the Glen" and "Riders to the Sea" are striking examples of that literature which is built out of life stuff; they contain rich veins of tragic humour and religious fervour. He may, in his notes for "The Aran Islands", have stressed the realistic vein which comes with a self-conscious study of the people; but by nature he was too human, too responsive to the human in others, to be enamoured of a mere statistical account. The eternal note of sadness was that which tempered the observation of Synge, and, as P. P. Howe says, in his critical study of the dramatist, "He had the ability of wringing from an atmosphere almost patriarchal, the tragedy of a small place raised to the tragic appeal of the entire world."

The fields and the sea were his background, and if in "The Shadow of the Glen" we obtain a certain pastoral quality, in "Riders to the Sea" we are given as distinct a *genre* picture as in Hermann Heijerman's Dutch play, "The Good Hope."

Bourgeois claims that Synge always told his friends "In the Shadow of the Glen" was composed before "Riders to the Sea"[1], but only just before. The two plays were practically finished by the end of 1902. Masefield writes that when he heard

[1] In M. Bourgeois's "John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre", 1913, p. 307, there is a complete stage history of the play.

them read in London, in January, 1903, at the rooms of one who was always generously helpful to writers not yet sure of their root, "The Shadow" was complete and "The Riders" not quite complete. "A lady [Lady Gregory] read the plays very beautifully. Afterwards we all applauded. Synge learned his métier that night. Until then all his work had been tentative and in the air. After that, he went forward knowing what he could do."

There are some who believe that the influence of Pierre Loti on Synge was very pronounced. Bourgeois declares that it was conspicuously apparent in "Riders to the Sea." However that may be, we do know that this play embodies some of the mystical strain of Maeterlinck.

In his essay on "Synge and the Ireland of His Time", Yeats declares:

> Once when I had been saying that though it seemed to me that a conventional descriptive passage encumbered the action at the moment of crisis, I liked "The Shadow of the Glen" better than "Riders to the Sea," that is, for all the nobility of its end, its mood of Greek tragedy, too passive in suffering; and had quoted from Matthew Arnold's introduction to "Empedocles on Etna", Synge answered, "It is a curious thing that 'The Riders to the Sea' succeeds with an English but not with an Irish audience, and 'The Shadow of the Glen', which is not liked by an English audience, is always liked in Ireland, though it is disliked there in theory." Since then "The Riders to the Sea" has grown into great popularity in Dublin, partly because, with the tactical instinct of an Irish mob, the demonstrators against "The Playboy", both in the press and in the theatre, where it began the evening, selected it for applause.

Bourgeois agrees that Loti's "Pêcheur d'Islande" and Hermann Heijerman's "The Good Hope" are behind "Riders to the Sea." He likewise quotes Padraic Colum as having stated that Synge said to him that one of the reasons why he wrote "Riders to the Sea" was that he had personally begun to anticipate something of the sadness of old age and death.

> "Riders to the Sea" [writes Howe] gets so fierce a momentum upon it that Synge's very regard for time is burned up in the flame; but here the appearance of fault might easily have been avoided by a lesser dramatist, for it comes in only with Synge's refusal to "make talk." In its passionate simplicity, the tragedy becomes over-simplified and reality escapes it.

It is because reality escapes it that Synge's realism is mystical poetry. And while the close of the tragedy does not smite one with that personal reaction one has in witnessing Heijerman's "The Good Hope", while the effect on the reader and observer is distinctly joyless and without active response, nevertheless a deeper note of human nature is struck by Synge than by Heijerman.

It is not our place here to discuss the advance made by Synge in the technique of the one-act play. It is a study, however, none the less profitable, as is also to draw from Synge's notebooks how a dramatist may shape material to his end.

Synge introduced into the Irish Drama a new subject and a new rhythm. His method seems to have been almost self-conscious in his scraping of humanity to the bone and building it up again through his own personality. James Huneker speaks of his clear, rich vibrant prose, and lauds his gypsy temperament. No dramatist, other than Synge, of the Irish Theatre, has given to the Irish Movement that vitality which will outlast the special Movement and mark it as great drama.

RIDERS TO THE SEA

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY J. M. SYNGE

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CHARACTERS

First performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, February 25th, 1904

MAURYA	*an old woman*	Honor Lavelle
BARTLEY	*her son*	W. G. Fay
CATHLEEN	*her daughter*	Sarah Allgood
NORA	*a younger daughter*	Emma Vernon
MEN AND WOMEN		

RIDERS TO THE SEA

SCENE. — *An Island off the West of Ireland.*

[*Cottage kitchen, with nets, oil-skins, spinning wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc.* CATHLEEN, *a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire; then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel.* NORA, *a young girl, puts her head in at the door*]

NORA [*in a low voice*]. Where is she?

CATHLEEN. She's lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able.

[NORA *comes in softly, and takes a bundle from under her shawl*]

CATHLEEN [*spinning the wheel rapidly*]. What is it you have?

NORA. The young priest is after bringing them. It's a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal.

[CATHLEEN *stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen*]

NORA. We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, some time herself will be down looking by the sea.

CATHLEEN. How would they be Michael's, Nora. How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

NORA. The young priest says he's known the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, "with crying and lamenting."

[*The door which* NORA *half closed is blown open by a gust of wind*]

CATHLEEN [*looking out anxiously*]. Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

NORA. "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living."

CATHLEEN. Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

NORA. Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind. [*She goes over to the table with tha bundle*] Shall I open it now?

CATHLEEN. Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done. [*Coming to the table*] It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying.

NORA [*goes to the inner door and listens*]. She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

CATHLEEN. Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.

[*They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney;* CATHLEEN *goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft.* MAURYA *comes from the inner room*]

MAURYA [*looking up at* CATHLEEN *and speaking querulously*]. Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

CATHLEEN. There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space [*throwing down the turf*] and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

[NORA *picks up the turf and puts it round the pot-oven*]

MAURYA [*sitting down on a stool at the fire*]. He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west.

He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely.

NORA. He'll not stop him, mother, and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying he would go.

MAURYA. Where is he itself?

NORA. He went down to see would there be another boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till he's here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east.

CATHLEEN. I hear some one passing the big stones.

NORA [*looking out*]. He's coming now, and he in a hurry.

BARTLEY [*comes in and looks round the room. Speaking sadly and quietly*]. Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

CATHLEEN [*coming down*]. Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.

NORA [*giving him a rope*]. Is that it, Bartley?

MAURYA. You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards. [BARTLEY *takes the rope*] It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up to-morrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

BARTLEY [*beginning to work with the rope*]. I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below.

MAURYA. It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara.

[*She looks round at the boards*]

BARTLEY. How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

MAURYA. If it wasn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night. If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

BARTLEY [*working at the halter, to* CATHLEEN]. Let you go down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

MAURYA. How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

BARTLEY. [*To* CATHLEEN] If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work.

MAURYA. It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drownd'd with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?

[BARTLEY *lays down the halter, takes off his old coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel*]

BARTLEY. [*To* NORA] Is she coming to the pier?

NORA [*looking out*]. She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

BARTLEY [*getting his purse and tobacco*]. I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.

MAURYA [*turning round to the fire, and putting her shawl over her head*]. Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

CATHLEEN. It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

BARTLEY [*taking the halter*]. I must go now quickly. I'll ride down on the red mare, and the gray pony 'll run behind me. . . . The blessing of God on you. [*He goes out*]

MAURYA [*crying out as he is in the door*]. He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

CATHLEEN. Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on every one in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear?

[MAURYA *takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking round*]

NORA [*turning towards her*]. You're taking away the turf from the cake.

CATHLEEN [*crying out*]. The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread.

[*She comes over to the fire*]

NORA. And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.

CATHLEEN [*turning the cake out of the oven*]. It's destroyed he'll be, surely. There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking for ever.

[MAURYA *sways herself on her stool*]

CATHLEEN [*cutting off some of the bread and rolling it in a cloth; to* MAURYA]. Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see him then and the dark word will be broken, and you can say "God speed you", the way he'll be easy in his mind.

MAURYA [*taking the bread*]. Will I be in it as soon as himself?

CATHLEEN. If you go now quickly.

MAURYA [*standing up unsteadily*]. It's hard set I am to walk.

CATHLEEN [*looking at her anxiously*]. Give her the stick, Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones.

NORA. What stick?

CATHLEEN. The stick Michael brought from Connemara.

MAURYA [*taking a stick* NORA *gives her*]. In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old.

[*She goes out slowly.* NORA *goes over to the ladder*]

CATHLEEN. Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly. She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the thing she'd do.

NORA. Is she gone round by the bush?

CATHLEEN [*looking out.*] She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it again.

NORA [*getting the bundle from the loft*]. The young priest said he'd be passing to-morrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely.

CATHLEEN [*taking the bundle*]. Did he say what way they were found?

NORA [*coming down*]. "There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north."

CATHLEEN [*trying to open the bundle*]. Give me a knife, Nora, the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

NORA [*giving her a knife*]. I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

CATHLEEN [*cutting the string*]. It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago — the man sold us that knife — and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal.

NORA. And what time would a man take, and he floating?

[CATHLEEN *opens the bundle and takes out a bit of a stocking. They look at them eagerly*]

CATHLEEN [*in a low voice*]. The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

NORA. I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other. [*She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner*] It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

CATHLEEN. I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it. [*Pointing to the corner*] There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do.

[NORA *brings it to her and they compare the flannel*]

CATHLEEN. It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

NORA [*who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out*]. It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

CATHLEEN [*taking the stocking*]. It's a plain stocking.

NORA. It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three score stitches, and I dropped four of them.

CATHLEEN [*counts the stitches*]. It's that number is in it. [*Crying out*] Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of

him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

NORA [*swinging herself round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes*]. And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

CATHLEEN [*after an instant*]. Tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

NORA [*looking out*]. She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

CATHLEEN. Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

NORA [*helping* CATHLEEN *to close the bundle*]. We'll put them here in the corner.

[*They put them into a hole in the chimney corner.* CATHLEEN *goes back to the spinning-wheel*]

NORA. Will she see it was crying I was?

CATHLEEN. Keep your back to the door the way the light 'll not be on you.

[NORA *sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door.* MAURYA *comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and* NORA *points to the bundle of bread*]

CATHLEEN [*after spinning for a moment*]. You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[MAURYA *begins to keen softly, without turning round*]

CATHLEEN. Did you see him riding down? [MAURYA *goes on keening*]

CATHLEEN [*a little impatiently*]. God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you.

MAURYA [*with a weak voice*]. My heart's broken from this day.

CATHLEEN [*as before*]. Did you see Bartley?

MAURYA. I seen the fearfulest thing.

CATHLEEN [*leaves her wheel and looks out*]. God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the gray pony behind him.

MAURYA [*starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair. With a frightened voice*]. The gray pony behind him.

CATHLEEN [*coming to the fire*]. What is it ails you, at all?

MAURYA [*speaking very slowly*]. I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

CATHLEEN AND NORA. Uah.

[*They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire*]

NORA. Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA. I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony behind him. [*She puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes*] The Son of God spare us, Nora!

CATHLEEN. What is it you seen.

MAURYA. I seen Michael himself.

CATHLEEN [*speaking softly*]. You did not, mother; it wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God.

MAURYA [*a little defiantly*]. I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare; and I tried to say "God speed you", but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and "the blessing of God on you", says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the gray pony, and there was Michael upon it — with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.

CATHLEEN [*begins to keen*]. It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed, surely.

NORA. Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God wouldn't leave her destitute with no son living?

MAURYA [*in a low voice, but clearly*]. It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and husband's father, and six sons in this house — six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world — and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen, and

Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door.

[*She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them*]

NORA [*in a whisper*]. Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the north-east?

CATHLEEN [*in a whisper*]. There's some one after crying out by the seashore.

MAURYA [*continues without hearing anything*]. There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it — it was a dry day, Nora — and leaving a track to the door.

[*She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads*]

MAURYA [*half in a dream, to* CATHLEEN]. Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

CATHLEEN. Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

MAURYA. There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it.

CATHLEEN. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

[*She reaches out and hands* MAURYA *the clothes that belonged to* MICHAEL. MAURYA *stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands.* NORA *looks out*]

NORA. They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN [*in a whisper to the women who have come in*]. Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. It is surely, God rest his soul.

[*Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of* BARTLEY, *laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table*]

CATHLEEN. [*To the women, as they are doing so*] What way was he drowned?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[MAURYA *has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement.* CATHLEEN *and* NORA *kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door*]

MAURYA [*raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her*]. They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. [*To* NORA] Give me the Holy Water, Nora, there's a small sup still on the dresser. [NORA *gives it to her*]

MAURYA [*drops* MICHAEL'S *clothes across* BARTLEY'S *feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him*]. It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long

nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[*She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath*]

CATHLEEN. [*To an old man*] Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

THE OLD MAN [*looking at the boards*]. Are there nails with them?

CATHLEEN. There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

ANOTHER MAN. It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

CATHLEEN. It's getting old she is, and broken.

[MAURYA *stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of* MICHAEL'S *clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water*]

NORA [*in a whisper to* CATHLEEN]. She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would any one have thought that?

CATHLEEN [*slowly and clearly*]. An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA [*puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on* BARTLEY'S *feet*]. They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn [*bending her head*]; and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world.

[*She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away*]

MAURYA [*continuing*]. Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

[*She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly*]

THOMAS MUSKERRY

(1910)

By Padraic Colum

PADRAIC COLUM

Padraic Colum is one of the younger members of the Irish Players. He has, for some years, resided in New York, content to publish his plays, to utter significant remarks regarding the trend of modern poetry, and to write poetry characteristic of the modern manner. His career, as a dramatist, runs parallel to that of Synge, and his work contains the usual amount of fervour towards religious and national questions, which characterizes the work of so many of his contemporaries. It would seem that there was something outside the general scheme of the National Theatre in the work of Padraic Colum; for the Abbey Theatre managers have allowed him to break from them and they have not always been cordial toward the spirit of his dramas.

Much biographical data is to be had from a letter written the present editor by Mr. Colum. It runs as follows:

New York, January 3rd, 1918.

I was one of the foundation members of the Irish National Theatre, joining in 1903 a group whose prominent members were Mr. W. G. Fay, Mr. Frank Fay, and Mr. Dudley Digges (who is now in New York, as Mr. George Arliss's stage-manager). This group was recruited from certain Irish political societies, and it came into existence for the purpose of play production, after the last of their successive performances which the Irish Literary Theatre had given. The Irish Literary Theatre, let me remind you, had been brought into being by Mr. Yeats, Mr. Edward Martyn, and Mr. George Moore. Its object was to give a performance for one week in a Dublin Theatre. The plays given were written by Irishmen, Mr. Yeats himself, Mr. Martyn, and Mr. Moore in collaboration with Mr. Yeats.

The players were English actors, and it seemed impossible at the time to get Irish trained players. However, the little group to which I referred had a capable stage director in Mr. W. G. Fay, and a splendid elocutionist in Mr. F. Fay. These two men gave a fine training to the amateur players they had gathered around them, and, when the Irish Literary Theatre had given the last of their performances, Mr. Yeats found them capable of producing his play, "Cathleen ni Houlihan", and with this play and A. E.'s "Deirdre", the Irish National Theatre began. Mr. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J. M. Synge joined the group. Some years afterwards, this original group split on a question of administration. Originally every member of the group had a voice in its policy. This made its management very unwieldy, and it was decided to abolish this voting power and to create a directorate of four, — Mr. Yeats, Lady Gregory, J. M. Synge, and W. G. Fay. I was amongst those who left the theatre on that occasion.

The Irish National Theatre had already produced two plays of mine, "Broken Soil", and "The Land." "Broken Soil" was afterwards put into a different

form and given the title of "The Fiddler's House." The play called "Thomas Muskerry" was to follow these two plays. I had projected a series of plays that was to have dealt with the various classes in Ireland, from the peasant to the intellectual. The first of the projected series was "The Land." I reached the middle classes with "Thomas Muskerry", which shows the life of small officials in a small town. It should have been called "The Workhouse Master", a title which would better fit its class conception, as you will see when you think of the other titles, "The Land" and "The Fiddler's House." But Lady Gregory had already used "The Workhouse Ward" as a title, and rather than cause any confusion I dropped my original title.

After its first production in the Abbey Theatre, the play was attacked as putting forward a degraded type of Irish life. The weekly journal, *Sinn Fein*, spoke of "Muskerry" as a dangerous phase of Irish literature.

These three Irish plays of mine, "The Land", "The Fiddler's House", and "Thomas Muskerry", have for their motives the delineation of family life in Ireland. In each play an individual interest stands out as against the group. The tragedy in "Thomas Muskerry" arises from the fact that in the conflict with this family group, the old man's life is frustrated and ruined.[1]

[1] Colum and Lord Dunsany at one time collaborated. The latter has written as follows to Mr. Edward Bierstadt: "Colum suggested that we should write a play together about Alexander. He came to stay with me and I got out Plutarch and we read a bit about him together. We agreed we would kill Clitus, but we had no plot. I got started on act three and tried to get Colum started on another act, but I could not get him to begin. Probably his instinct realized how futile was the suggestion which he had made and I had heartily agreed to. Finally he asked me to leave him the killing of Clitus and to go on with the rest. Well, at the pace I work, I very soon did all the rest, and I read it to Colum and he then very generously released me from my promise to let him kill Clitus."

THOMAS MUSKERRY

By PADRAIC COLUM

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CHARACTERS

Thomas Muskerry	The Master of Garrisowen Workhouse
Mrs. Crilly	His Daughter
Crofton Crilly	His Son-in-law
Albert Crilly	His Grandson
Anna Crilly	His Granddaughter
James Scollard	Thomas Muskerry's Successor
Felix Tournour	The Porter at Workhouse Lodge
Myles Gorman	A Blind Piper
Christy Clarke	A Boy reared in the Workhouse
Shanley Mickie Cripes An Old Man	Paupers in Workhouse

Scene *Garrisowen, a town in the Irish Midlands.*

"Thomas Muskerry" was first produced on May 5th, 1910, by the Abbey Theater Company, at the Abbey Theater, Dublin, with the following cast:

Thomas Muskerry	Arthur Sinclair
Mrs. Crilly	Sara Allgood
Crofton Crilly	J. M. Kerrigan
Albert Crilly	Eric Gorman
Anna Crilly	Maire O'Neill
Myles Gorman	Fred O'Donovan
Felix Tournour	Sydney Morgan
James Scollard	J. A. O'Rourke
Christy Clarke	U. Wright
Mickie Cripes	Fred Rowland
Tom Shanley	Ambrose Power
An Old Pauper	J. M. Kerrigan

THOMAS MUSKERRY

ACT I

[*The Master's office in Garrisowen Workhouse. It is partly an office, partly a living room. To the right is a door opening on corridor, and in the back, left, a door leading to the Master's apartments. There is an iron stove down from back and towards right, and a big grandfather's clock back towards door of apartments. A basket armchair down from stove, and a wooden chair beside it. There is a desk against wall, left, and an office stool before it. Down from this desk a table on which is a closed desk. On table are books, papers, and files. On a wooden chair beside the armchair is a heap of newspapers and periodicals. There is a rack beside corridor door, and on rack a shawl, an old coat, a hat, and a bunch of big keys. In the corner, right, is a little cabinet, and on it a small mirror. Above door of apartments a picture of Daniel O'Connell. The grandfather's clock is ticking audibly. It is 8.45* P. M. *The gas over desk is lighted*]

[CHRISTY CLARKE, *a youth of about seventeen, is seated in the armchair reading a periodical. His clothes are threadbare, but brushed and clean. He looks studious, and has intellectual possibilities. The clock ticks on, the boy reads, but with little attention. At the corridor door there is a knocking.* CHRISTY CLARKE *turns slightly. The door opens, and a tall man in the ugly dress of a pauper is seen. The man is* FELIX TOURNOUR. *He carries in a bucket of coal. He performs this action like one who has acquired the habit of work under an overseer. He is an ugly figure in his pauper dress. His scanty beard is coal black. He has a wide mouth and discoloured teeth. His forehead is narrow and bony. He is about forty-five*]

TOURNOUR [*in a harsh voice, after looking around*]. Is he not back yet?

CHRISTY [*without stirring*]. Is who not back yet?

TOURNOUR. The Master I'm talking about. I don't know where he does be going these evenings.

[*He shovels coal into the stove*]

CHRISTY. And what is it to you where he does be going?

TOURNOUR. Don't talk to me like that, young fellow. You're poorhouse rearing, even though you are a pet. Will he be sitting up here to-night, do you know?

CHRISTY. What's that to you whether he will or not?

TOURNOUR. If he's sitting up late he'll want more coal to his fire.

CHRISTY. Well, the abstracts will have to be finished to-night.

TOURNOUR. Then he will be staying up. He goes out for a walk in the evenings now, and I don't know where he does be going.

CHRISTY. He goes out for a walk in the country. [TOURNOUR *makes a leer of contempt*] Do you never go for a walk in the country, Felix Tournour?

TOURNOUR. They used to take me out for walks when I was a little fellow, but they never got me out into the country since.

CHRISTY. I suppose, now that you're in the porter's lodge, you watch every one that goes up and down the road?

TOURNOUR. It gratifies me to do so — would you believe that now?

CHRISTY. You know a lot, Felix Tournour.

TOURNOUR. We're told to advance in knowledge, young fellow. How long is Tom Muskerry the Master of Garrisowen Workhouse?

CHRISTY. Thirty years this spring.

TOURNOUR. Twenty-nine years.

CHRISTY. He's here thirty years according to the books.

TOURNOUR. Twenty-nine years.

CHRISTY. Thirty years.

TOURNOUR. Twenty-nine years. I was born in the workhouse, and I mind when the Master came in to it. Whist now, here he is, and time for him.

[*He falls into an officious manner. He closes up the stove and puts bucket away. Then he goes over to desk, and, with his foot on the rung of the office stool, he turns the gas on full.* CHRISTY CLARK *gets out of arm-chair, and begins to arrange the periodicals that are on wooden chair. The corridor door opens. The man who appears is not the Master, however. He is the blind piper,* MYLES GORMAN, *who is dressed in the pauper garb.* MYLES GORMAN *is a Gael of the West of Ireland, with a face full of intellectual vigour. He is about sixty, and carries himself with energy. His face is pale and he has a fringe of a white beard. The eye-balls in his head are contracted, but it is evident he has some vestiges of sight. Before the others are aware who he is, he has advanced into the room. He stands there now turning the attentive face of the blind*]

GORMAN. Mister Muskerry! Are you there, Mister Muskerry?

TOURNOUR. What do you want, my oul' fellow?

GORMAN [*with a puzzled look*]. Well, now, I've a favour to ask of your honour.

TOURNOUR. Be off out of this to your ward.

GORMAN. Is that Mister Muskerry?

CHRISTY. Mister Muskerry isn't here.

GORMAN. And who am I talking to?

CHRISTY. You are talking to Felix Tournour.

GORMAN. Felix Tournour! Ay, ay. Good night, Felix Tournour. When will the Master be back?

TOURNOUR [*coming to him*]. Not till you're out of this, and back in your ward.

GORMAN. Wasn't there a boy speaking to me?

CHRISTY. Yes [*speaking as if to a deaf man*]. The Master will be going the rounds in a while, and you can speak to him in the ward.

GORMAN. I've a favour to ask the Master, and I don't want to ask it before the others. [*To* CHRISTY] Will the Master be here soon, a vick vig? [1]

TOURNOUR [*taking him by the shoulders*]. Here, now, come on, this is your way out.

[*He turns* GORMAN *to the door. As he is putting him out* THOMAS MUSKERRY *enters*]

TOURNOUR. This oul' fellow came into the office, and I was leading him back into his ward.

MUSKERRY. Leave the man alone.

[TOURNOUR *retreats to the stove and takes up the bucket; after a look behind he goes out and closes the corridor door.* CHRISTY CLARKE *takes the periodicals over to table and sits down.* MYLES GORMAN *has been eager and attentive.* THOMAS MUSKERRY *stands with his back to the stove. He is over sixty. He is a large man, fleshy in face and figure, sanguine and benevolent in disposition. He has the looks and movements of one in authority. His hair is white and long; his silver beard is trimmed. His clothes are loosely fitting. He wears no overcoat, but has a white knitted muffler round his neck. He has on a black, broad-brimmed hat, and carries a walking-stick*]

MUSKERRY. Well, my good man?

GORMAN. I'm here to ask a favour from you, Master.

MUSKERRY. You should proffer your request when I'm in the ward. However, I'm ready to give you my attention.

GORMAN. I'm a blinded man, Master, and when you're in the ward I can't get you by yourself conveniently. I can't come up to you like the other oul' men and speak to you private like.

MUSKERRY. Well, now, what can I do for you?

GORMAN [*eagerly*]. They tell me that to-morrow's the market-day, and I thought that you might give me a pass, and let me go out about the town.

MUSKERRY. We'll consider it, Gorman.

GORMAN. Master, let me out in the town on the market-day.

[1] A mhic bhig, my little son.

MUSKERRY. We couldn't let you out to play your pipes through the town.

GORMAN. I'm not thinking of the music at all, Master, but to be out in the day and to feel the throng moving about, and to be talking to the men that do be on the roads.

MUSKERRY. We'll consider it, Gorman.

[*He takes off muffler, and puts it on back of armchair*]

GORMAN. Well, I'm very much obliged to your honour. Good night to you, Master.

[*He passes* MUSKERRY *and goes towards the door.* MUSKERRY *has been regarding him*]

MUSKERRY. Tell me this, Gorman, were you always on the roads?

GORMAN. I was driving cattle, and I was dealing in horses. Then I took up with an oul' man, and he taught me the pipes. I'm playing the pipes ever since, and that's thirty years ago. Well, the eyes began to wither up on me, and now I've only a stim of sight. I'm a blinded man from this out, Master.

MUSKERRY. And what will you do?

GORMAN. Oh, sure the roads of Ireland are before me when I leave this; I'll be playing my bit of music.

[*He moves to the door*]

MUSKERRY. Tell me; have you any family yourself?

GORMAN. Ne'er a chick nor child belonging to me. Ne'er a woman lay by me. I went the road by myself. Will you think of what I asked you, Master?

MUSKERRY. I'll consider it.

GORMAN. Good night to your honour. Remember my name, Master — Gorman, Myles Gorman.

[MUSKERRY *stands looking after* GORMAN]

MUSKERRY. Now, Christy Clarke, I consider that the man gone out is a very exceptional man.

CHRISTY. Is it Myles Gorman?

MUSKERRY. Yes. I'd even say that, considering his station in life, Myles Gorman is a very superior man.

CHRISTY. They say he's not a good musician.

MUSKERRY. And maybe he's not. I consider, however, that there's great intelligence in his face. He stands before you, and you feel that he has the life of a young colt, and then you're bound to think that, in spite of the fact that he's blind and a wanderer, the man has not wasted his life.

[MUSKERRY *settles himself in the armchair*]

CHRISTY. Will you give leave for to-morrow?

MUSKERRY. No, Christy, I will not.

CHRISTY. Why not, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY. That man would break bounds and stay away.

CHRISTY. Do you think he would?

MUSKERRY. He'd fly off, like the woodquest flying away from the tame pigeons.

CHRISTY. He and his brother had a farm between them. His brother was married, and one day the brother told Myles to go to Dublin to see a comrade of his who was sick. Myles was home in a week, and when he came back he found that his brother had sold the place and was gone out of the country.

MUSKERRY. His brother did wrong, but he didn't do so much wrong to Myles Gorman.

CHRISTY. How is that, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY. He sent Myles Gorman to his own life. He's a man who went his own way always; a man who never had any family nor any affairs; a man far different from me, Christy Clarke. I was always in the middle of affairs. Then, too, I busied myself about other people. It was for the best, I think; but that's finished. On the desk under your hand is a letter, and I want you to bring it to me.

CHRISTY [*going through papers idly*]. "I am much obliged for your favour —"

MUSKERRY. That's not it.

CHRISTY [*reading another letter*]. "I am about to add to the obligations under which I stand to you, by recommending to your notice my grandson, Albert Crilly —"

MUSKERRY. That's the letter. It's the last of its kind. Bring it to me. [CHRISTY CLARKE *brings over the letter*] There comes a turn in the blood and a turn in the mind, Christy. This while back I've been going out to the country instead of into the town, and coming back here in the evenings I've seen the workhouse with the big wall around it, and the big gate going into it, and I've said to myself that Thomas Muskerry ought to be as secure and contented here as if he was in his own castle.

CHRISTY. And so you ought, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. Look round at the office, Christy. I've made it as fit for me as the nest for the wren. I'll spend a few more years here, and then I'll go out on pension. I won't live in the town. I've seen a place in the country I'd like, and the people will be leaving it in a year or two.

CHRISTY. Where is it, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY. I'll say no more about it now, but it's not far from this, and its near the place where I was reared.

CHRISTY. And so you'll go back to your own place?

MUSKERRY. As Oliver Goldsmith my fellow county man, and I might almost say, my fellow parishioner, says — What's this the lines are about the hare, Christy?

CHRISTY.

"And like the Hare whom Hounds and Horns pursue
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew."

MUSKERRY. Aye.

"And like the Hare whom Hounds and Horns pursue" —

[*The clock strikes nine*]

CHRISTY. You weren't on the rounds yet?

MUSKERRY [*startled*]. Would you believe it, now, it was nearly passing my mind to go on the rounds? [*He rises, putting the letter in his pocket*] Where's that fellow, Albert Crilly? He was to have been in here to give me a hand with the abstracts. Christy Clarke, go down to Miss Coghlan's and get me two novelettes. Bring me up two nice love stories, and be here when I come back.

[CHRISTY CLARKE *takes his cap off rack and goes out.* THOMAS MUSKERRY *puts on his scarf, goes to the rack and takes down the bunch of keys. As he is going out* FELIX TOURNOUR *enters with a bucket of coal. He carries it over to the stove*]

MUSKERRY. Now, Tournour, sweep up this place.

[THOMAS MUSKERRY *goes out by corridor door.* FELIX TOURNOUR *takes brush from under desk, left, and begins to sweep in the direction of corridor door*]

TOURNOUR. Sweeping, sweeping! I'll run out of the house some day on account of the work I've to do for Master Thomas Muskerry. [*He leans on his brush in front of stove*] I know why you're going for walks in the country, my oul' cod. There's them in town that you've got enough of. You don't want to go bail for Madam Daughter, nor for Count Crofton Crilly, your son-in-law, nor for the Masters and Mistresses; all right, my oul' cod-fish. That I may see them laying you out on the flags of Hell.

[*He puts the brush standing upright, and speaks to it*]

"The Devil went out for a ramble at night,
Through Garrisowen Union to see every sight.
The oul' men were dreaming of meat to come near them.
And the Devil cocked ears at the words for to hear them.
'Twice a year we get meat,' said the toothless oul' men,
'Oh, Lord send the meat won't be too tough again.'
To clear away dishes Mick Fogarty goes,
May the Devil burn the nails off his toes.
Deep dreaming that night of fast days before,
Sagging the walls with the pull of his snore,
In his chamber above Thomas Muskerry lay snug,
When the Devil this summons roared in his lug —"

[*The door of the Master's apartments is opened and* ALBERT CRILLY *enters.* ALBERT CRILLY *is a young man, who might be a bank clerk or a medical student. He is something of a dude, but has a certain insight and wit*]

ALBERT [*lighting a cigarette*]. Is the grandparent here, Tournour?

TOURNOUR. He's gone on the rounds, Mister Albert.

ALBERT. What time was he up this morning?

TOURNOUR. He was late enough. He wasn't up in time to come to Mass with us.

ALBERT. The old man will get into trouble.

TOURNOUR. If the nuns hear about it.

ALBERT. He'll have to give the whole thing up soon.

TOURNOUR. He's well off that can get somebody else to do the work for him.

[*He continues to sweep towards corridor*]

ALBERT. Tournour, you're a damned clever fellow. I heard a piece of yours yesterday that I thought was damned good.

TOURNOUR. Was it a rhyme?

ALBERT. It was something called "The Devil's Rambles."

TOURNOUR [*taking a step towards him*]. Don't let the boss hear, and I'll tell it to you, Mr. Albert.

[*He holds the brush in his hands and is about to begin the recitation when* CROFTON CRILLY *enters from the Master's apartments.* CROFTON CRILLY *has a presentable appearance. He is big and well made, has a fair beard and blue eyes. A pipe is always in his mouth. He is a loiterer, a talker, a listener*]

CRILLY. Are you going to finish the abstracts to-night, Albert?

ALBERT. I believe I am. Go on with "The Devil's Rambles", Tournour.

CRILLY. I heard it in Keegan's. It's damn good.

TOURNOUR. I don't like saying it before Mister Crilly.

CRILLY [*with easy contempt*]. Go on with it, man; I'll leave a pint in Keegan's for you.

TOURNOUR. Well, you mightn't like it.

CRILLY. Have done talking and go on with it.

TOURNOUR [*reciting*] —

"In his chamber above — a — a *person* lay snug,
When the Devil this summons roared in his lug —
'Get up,' said the Devil, 'and swear you'll be true,
And the oath of allegiance I'll tender anew.
You'll have pork, veal, and lamb, mutton-chops, fowl and fish,
Cabbage and carrots and leeks as you wish.
No fast days to you will make visitation,
For your sake the town will have dispensation.
Long days you will have, without envy or strife,
And when you depart you'll find the same life,
And in the next world you'll have your will and your sway,
With a Poorhouse to govern all your own way,
And I'll promise you this; to keep up your state,
You'll have Felix Tournour to watch at the gate.'"

CRILLY. That's damn good. I must get a copy of the whole of it to show at Keegan's.

[TOURNOUR *has swept as far as the corridor door. He opens it and sweeps down the passage. He goes out and closes door*]

CRILLY. That's a damn clever fellow. [*He becomes anxious, as with a troubled recollection. He goes to the little cabinet, opens it, and takes out a bottle of whisky and a glass. He pours some whisky into the glass, and remains looking at himself in the mirror. He smooths his beard. He goes to the armchair with the glass of whisky, the anxious expression still on his face*] This is a cursed town.

[*He drinks*]

ALBERT. Every town in Ireland is a cursed town.

CRILLY. But this is an extraordinarily cursed town. Everybody's in debt to everybody else. I don't know what's to be done. Now, imagine that fellow, James Covey, failing in business and getting clear out of the town.

ALBERT. Covey seems to have done it well.

CRILLY. God knows how many he has stuck.

ALBERT. Well, he didn't stick the Crillys for anything.

CRILLY. Albert, you don't know how these financial things work out. Do you think would his brother settle?

ALBERT. Settle with whom?

CRILLY. Well . . . with any of the . . . any of the people that have . . . I don't know. It's a cursed town. If I had joined the police at your age, I'd have a pension by this, and I mightn't care for any of them.

ALBERT. I wish I had a job and I'd wait on the pension.

CRILLY. Oh, you'll be all right. The grandfather is seeing about your job.

ALBERT. If the grandparent gets me that job I'll want two new suits at least.

CRILLY. 'Pon my soul, Albert, I don't know what's to be done. [*His mind wanders off*] I suppose the abstracts have to go out in the morning.

ALBERT. They have. And damn all the old man has done to them.

CRILLY. The Guardians hear that he's late in the mornings, Albert, and some of them are beginning to question his fitness to check the stores.

ALBERT. The old man ought to resign.

CRILLY. I suppose he ought. I'm not wishing for his resignation myself, Albert. You know your mother regards it as a settled thing that he should come and live with us.

ALBERT. The mother and Anna are preparing for the event.

CRILLY. How's that, Albert?

ALBERT. Mother has James Scollard in her eye for the new Master.

CRILLY. Right enough! Scollard would get it, too, and then he would marry Anna.

ALBERT. That's the arrangement, I expect.

CRILLY. It mightn't be bad. Scollard mightn't want Nancy's money under that arrangement. Still I don't like the idea of the old man living in the house.

ALBERT. The mother would never think of letting him take himself and his pension anywhere else.

CRILLY. I don't think she would.

ALBERT. I wouldn't be surprised if he did go somewhere else. I hear he often goes up to that cottage in Stradrina.

CRILLY. What cottage, Albert?

ALBERT. Briar Cottage. I hear he sits down there, and talks of coming to live in the place.

CRILLY [*warningly*]. Albert, don't clap hands behind the bird. Take my word, and say nothing about it.

ALBERT. All right.

CRILLY. We'd have no comfort in the house if your mother's mind was distracted.

[MRS. CRILLY *enters from corridor. She is a woman of forty, dressed in a tailor-made costume. She has searching eyes. There is something of hysteria about her mouth. She has been good-looking*]

CRILLY. Good night, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. Are you finishing the abstracts, Albert?

ALBERT. I'm working at them. It's a good job we didn't leave the old man much latitude for making mistakes.

MRS. CRILLY [*closing door*]. He'll have to resign.

CRILLY. Good God, Marianne.

[*He rises*]

MRS. CRILLY. Well. Let him be sent away without a pension. Of course, he can live with us the rest of his life and give us nothing for keeping him.

CRILLY. I don't know what's in your mind at all, Marianne.

[*He crosses over to the cabinet, opens it, and fills out another glass of whisky*]

ALBERT. Let the old man do what suits himself.

CRILLY [*coming back to stove*]. Do, Marianne. Let him do what suits himself. For the present.

MRS. CRILLY. For pity's sake put down that glass and listen to what I have to say.

CRILLY. What's the matter, Marianne?

MRS. CRILLY. James Scollard came to me to-day, and he told me about the things that are noticed. . . . The nuns notice them, the Guardians notice them. He misses Mass. He is late on his rounds. He can't check the stores that are coming into the house. He may get himself into such trouble that he'll be dismissed with only an apology for a pension, or with no pension at all.

CRILLY. I don't know what's to be done.

MRS. CRILLY. If he could be got to resign now, James Scollard would have a good chance of becoming Workhouse Master. He would marry Anna, and we would still have some hand in the affairs of the House.

CRILLY. Yes, yes. I think that Scollard could make a place for himself.

ALBERT. The old man won't be anxious to retire.

MRS. CRILLY. Why shouldn't he retire when his time is up?

ALBERT. Well, here he is what's called a potentate. He won't care to come down and live over Crilly's shop.

MRS. CRILLY. And where else would he live, in the name of God?

ALBERT. He won't want to live with our crowd.

MRS. CRILLY. What crowd? The boys can be sent to school, you'll be on your situation, and Anna will be away. [*She seats herself in the armchair*] I don't know what Albert means when he says that the Master would not be content to live with us. It was always settled that he would come to us when his service was over.

[ALBERT, *who has been going over the books, has met something that surprises him. He draws* CRILLY *to the desk. The two go over the papers, puzzled and excited.* ANNA CRILLY *enters from corridor. She is a handsome girl of about nineteen or twenty, with a rich complexion, dark hair and eyes. She is well dressed, and wears a cap of dark fur. She stands at the stove, behind her mother, holding her*

hands over the stove. MRS. CRILLY *watches the pair at the desk*]

MRS. CRILLY. We can't think of allowing a pension of fifty pounds a year to go out of our house. Where will we get money to send the boys to school?

ANNA. Mother. Grandfather is going to live away from us.

MRS. CRILLY. Why do you repeat what Albert says?

ANNA. I didn't hear Albert say anything.

MRS. CRILLY. Then, what are you talking about?

ANNA. Grandfather goes to Martin's cottage nearly every evening, and stays there for hours. They'll be leaving the place in a year or two, and Grandfather was saying that he would take the cottage when he retired from the Workhouse.

MRS. CRILLY. When did you hear this?

ANNA. This evening. Delia Martin told me.

MRS. CRILLY. And that's the reason why he has kept away from us. He goes to strangers, and leaves us in black ignorance of his thought.

[CRILLY *and* ALBERT *are busy at desk*]

CRILLY. Well, damn it all —

ALBERT. Here's the voucher.

CRILLY. God! I don't know what's to be done.

ALBERT. It's a matter of fifty tons.

[ALBERT *turns round deliberately, leaving his father going through the papers in desperate eagerness.* ALBERT *takes a cigarette from behind his ear, takes a match-box from his waistcoat pocket, and strikes a light. He goes towards door of apartments.* MRS. CRILLY *rises*]

ALBERT [*his hand on the handle of door*]. Well so-long.

MRS. CRILLY. Where are you going?

ALBERT. I'm leaving you to talk it over with the old man.

[MRS. CRILLY *looks from* ALBERT *to* CRILLY]

CRILLY. The Master has let himself in for something serious, Marianne.

ALBERT. It's a matter of fifty pounds. The old man has let the Guardians pay for a hundred tons of coal when only fifty were delivered.

MRS. CRILLY. Is that so, Crofton?

CRILLY. It looks like it, Marianne.

ALBERT. There were fifty tons of coal already in stores, but the Governor didn't take them into account. That cute boy, James Covey, delivered fifty tons and charged for the hundred. The old man passed on the certificate, and the Guardians paid Covey. They helped him to his passage to America.

[*He opens door and goes through*]

MRS. CRILLY. They will dismiss him — dismiss him without a pension.

ANNA. Mother. If he gets the pension first, could they take it back from him?

CRILLY. No. But they could make him pay back the fifty pounds in instalments.

MRS. CRILLY. Fifty pounds! We can't afford to lose fifty pounds.

ANNA. Who would find out about the coal, father?

CRILLY. The Guardians who take stock.

ANNA. And how would they know at this time whether there was a hundred or a hundred and fifty tons there at first?

CRILLY. The business men amongst them would know. However, there won't be an inspection for some time.

ANNA. Suppose grandfather had got his pension and had left the Workhouse, who would know about the coal?

CRILLY. The new Workhouse Master.

MRS. CRILLY. The new Workhouse Master —

CRILLY. Marianne —

MRS. CRILLY. Well?

CRILLY. I think I'll stay here and advise the old man.

MRS. CRILLY. No. Go away.

CRILLY [*at door of apartments*]. After all, I'm one of the Guardians, and something might be done.

MRS. CRILLY. You can do nothing. We can do nothing for him. Let him go to the strangers.

[CRILLY *goes out*]

MRS. CRILLY. Anna!

ANNA. Yes, mother.

MRS. CRILLY. The Martins are not giving up their house for a year or two?

ANNA. No, mother.

MRS. CRILLY. If he resigns now his pension will be safe. There is nothing else against him.

ANNA. But some one will find out the difference in the coal.

MRS. CRILLY. It's the new Workhouse Master who will know that.

ANNA [*hardening*]. But *he* could not pass such a thing, mother.

MRS. CRILLY [*abandoning a position*]. Well, after your grandfather gets his pension we could make some arrangement with the Guardians.

ANNA. Yes, mother. Hasn't grandfather a hundred pounds invested in the shop?

MRS. CRILLY. It's not a hundred pounds. Besides, it's not an investment.

ANNA [*with a certain resolution in her rich voice*]. Mother. Is my money safe?

MRS. CRILLY. We could give you the eighty pounds, Anna, but after that we would need all the help we could get from you.

ANNA. Yes, mother.

MRS. CRILLY [*again taking up a position*]. But if we help James Scollard to the place.

ANNA [*with determination*]. Whether Mr. Scollard gets the place or does not get the place, I'll want my fortune, mother

MRS. CRILLY. Very well, Anna. If we could get him to come over. . . . [*She sits in armchair*] There's a lamb in Ginnell's field; you might call in tomorrow and ask them to prepare it for us.

ANNA. Then grandfather is coming to dinner on Sunday?

MRS. CRILLY. We must get him to come.

[*Some one is coming up the passage.* ANNA'S *hand is on handle of door. She holds it open.* THOMAS MUSKERRY *stands there*]

MUSKERRY [*pleased to see her*]. Well, Nancy!

ANNA. Good night, grandpapa.

[*He regards her with fondness*]

MRS. CRILLY. Good night, father.

MUSKERRY. This Nancy girl is looking remarkably well. [*He turns to* MRS. CRILLY] Well, ma'am, and how are you? I've written that letter for that rascally Albert.

[*He leaves his stick on table and goes to desk.* MRS. CRILLY *watches him.* ANNA *comes to her.* MUSKERRY *addresses an envelope with some labour.* MRS. CRILLY *notices a tress of* ANNA'S *hair falling down.* ANNA *kneels down beside her. She takes off* ANNA'S *cap, settles up the hair, and puts the cap on again. Having addressed the envelope,* MUSKERRY *holds up a piece of wax to the gas. He seals the letter, then holds it out*]

MUSKERRY. Here's the letter now, and maybe it's the last thing I can do for any of ye.

MRS. CRILLY. You are very good.

[MUSKERRY *goes to them*]

MUSKERRY. In season and out of season I've put myself at your service. I can do no more for ye.

[*She takes the letter from him. His resentment is breaking down. He sits on chair beside armchair. He speaks in a reconciling tone*]

MUSKERRY. You're looking well, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. I'm beginning to be well again.

MUSKERRY. And the infant? What age is he now?

MRS. CRILLY. Little Joseph is ten months old.

MUSKERRY. I dreamt of him last night. I thought Joseph became a bishop. He ought to be reared for the Church, Marianne. Well, well, I've nothing more to do with that. [*He settles himself in the armchair*] Did Christy Clarke bring in the papers?

ANNA. Christy Clarke hasn't been here at all, grandpapa.

MUSKERRY. Stand here till I look at you, Nancy. [ANNA *comes left of stove*] I wouldn't be surprised if you were the best-looking girl in the town, Nancy.

ANNA [*without any coquettishness*]. Anna Crilly is not going into competition with the others. [*She wraps the muffler round him, then kisses him*] Good night, grandpapa.

[*She goes out by corridor door*]

MRS. CRILLY. Thank you for the letter for Albert.

MUSKERRY. I think, Marianne, it's the last thing I can do for you or yours.

MRS. CRILLY. Well, we can't tell a bad story of you, and things are well with us.

MUSKERRY. I'm glad to hear that. I was thinking of going to see you next week.

MRS. CRILLY. Come to dinner on Sunday. We are having a lamb.

MUSKERRY. What sort is the lamb?

MRS. CRILLY. Oh, a very young lamb. Anna will make the dressing for you.

MUSKERRY. I'll send round a bottle of wine. Perhaps we'll be in the way of celebrating something for Albert.

MRS. CRILLY. Nancy was saying that you might like to stay a few days with us.

MUSKERRY. Stay a few days! How could I do that, ma'am?

MRS. CRILLY. You could get somebody to look after the House. James Scollard would do it, and you could stay out for a few days.

MUSKERRY. Well, indeed, I'll do no such thing. What put it into your head to ask me this?

MRS. CRILLY. Nancy said —

MUSKERRY. Let the girl speak for herself. What's in your mind, woman?

MRS. CRILLY. Well, you're not looking well.

MUSKERRY. I'm as well as ever I was.

MRS. CRILLY. Others do not think so.

MUSKERRY. I suppose you heard I was late a few mornings. No matter for that. I'm as well as ever I was. No more talk about it; I'm going on with the work.

[*He rises and goes over to desk*]

MRS. CRILLY. I'm sorry to say that no one else thinks as well of you as you do yourself.

MUSKERRY. Well, I'll hear no more about it, and that's enough about it. Why isn't Albert Crilly here?

MRS. CRILLY. Well, he was here, and he is coming back.

MUSKERRY. I'll want him. [*He takes up a card left on the desk. He turns round and reads*] — "You have let the Guardians pay for a hundred tons. James Covey delivered only fifty tons of coal." Who left this here?

MRS. CRILLY. I suppose Albert left it for you.

MUSKERRY. The impudent rascal. How dare he address himself like that to me? [*He throws card on table*]

MRS. CRILLY. Perhaps he found something out in the books.

MUSKERRY. No matter whether he did or not, he'll have to have respect when he addresses me. Anyway it's a lie — a damn infernal lie. I was in the stores the other day, and there was eighty tons of coal still there. Certainly twenty tons had been taken out of it. The Provision Check Account will show. [*He takes up a book and turns round. He goes back some pages. He lets the book fall. He stands there helpless*] I suppose you all are right in your judgment of me. I'm at my failing time. I'll have to leave this without pension or prospect. They'll send me away.

MRS. CRILLY. They had nothing against you before this.

MUSKERRY. I was spoken of as the pattern for the officials of Ireland.

MRS. CRILLY. If you resigned now —

MUSKERRY. Before this comes out. [*He looks for help*] Marianne, it would be like the blow to the struck ox if I lost my pension.

MRS. CRILLY. If you managed to get the pension you could pay the Guardians back in a lump sum.

MUSKERRY. If I resigned now, where would I go to?

MRS. CRILLY. It was always understood that you would stay with us.

MUSKERRY. No, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. You'll have the place to yourself. The boys will be going to school, and Albert will be away, too. Anna and myself will look after you.

MUSKERRY. I could stay for a while.

MRS. CRILLY. Oh, well, if you have a better place to go —

MUSKERRY. Remember what I said, Marianne. I've worked for you and yours, in season and out of season. There should be no more claims on me.

MRS. CRILLY. There are no more claims on you.

MUSKERRY. I'm willing to leave in the shop what I put into the shop. Let Anna know that it will come to her from me. I'll write to the Guardians to-night and I'll send in my resignation. I venture to think that they'll know their loss.

[MRS. CRILLY *goes out quietly by corridor door*]

MUSKERRY [*by himself*]. And I had made this place as fit for me as the nest for the wren. Wasn't he glad to write that card, the impudent rascal, with his tongue in his cheek? I'll consider it again. I won't leave this place till it fits myself to leave it.

[CHRISTY CLARKE *enters by corridor door with papers*]

MUSKERRY. They want me to resign from this place, Christy.

CHRISTY. You're thirty years here! Aren't you, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY. Thirty years, thirty years. Ay, Christy, thirty years; it's a long time. And I'm at my failing time. Perhaps I'm not able to do any more. Day after day there would be troubles here, and I wouldn't be able to face them. And in the end I might lose my position. I'm going to write out my resignation.

[*He goes to the desk and writes.* CHRISTY *is at table.* MUSKERRY *turns round after writing*]

MUSKERRY. No one that comes here can have the same heart for the poor that I had. I was earning in the year of the famine. I saw able men struggling to get the work that would bring them a handful of Indian meal. And I saw the little children waiting on the roads for relief. [*He turns back and goes on with letter. Suddenly a bell in the House begins to toll*] What's that for, Christy?

CHRISTY. Malachi O'Rourk, the Prince, as they called him, is dead.

MUSKERRY. Aye, I gave orders to toll him when he died. He was an estated gentleman, and songs were made about his family. People used to annoy him, but he's gone from them now. Bring me a little whisky, Christy.

[CHRISTY *goes to Cabinet.* MUSKERRY *follows him*]

CHRISTY. There's none in the bottle, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY [*bitterly*]. No, I suppose not. And is that rascal, Albert Crilly, coming back?

CHRISTY. He's coming, Mister Muskerry. I left the novelette on the table. Miss Coghlan says it's a nice love story. "The Heart of Angelina", it is called.

MUSKERRY. I haven't the heart to read.

[*The bell continues to toll.* CHRISTY *goes to door*]

CHRISTY. Good night, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. Good night, Christy.

[CHRISTY CLARKE *goes out through apartments.* THOMAS MUS*kerry is standing with hand on armchair. The bell tolls*]

[*Curtain*]

ACT II

[*In* CRILLY'S, *a month later. The room is the parlour off the shop. A glass door, right, leads into the shop, and the fireplace is above this door. In the back, right, is a cupboard door. Back is a window looking on the street. A door, left, leads to other rooms. There is a table near shop door and a horse-hair sofa back, an armchair at fire, and two leather-covered chairs about. Conventional pictures on walls, and two certificates framed, showing that some one in the house has passed some Intermediate examinations*

It is the forenoon of an April day. MRS. CRILLY *is seated on sofa, going through a heap of account books.* ANNA CRILLY *is at window.* CROFTON CRILLY *enters from the shop*]

CRILLY. It's all right, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. Well?

CRILLY. The Guardians insisted on appointing an outside person to take stock of the Workhouse stores. It's the new regulation, you know. Well, the job lay between young Dobbs and Albert, and Albert has got it. I don't say but it was a near thing.

MRS. CRILLY. I hope Albert will know what to do.

CRILLY. He'll want to watch the points. Where's the Master?

MRS. CRILLY. He's in his room upstairs.

CRILLY. Was he not out this morning?

MRS. CRILLY. He's not dressed yet.

CRILLY. He was more particular when he was in the Workhouse.

ANNA. I know who those two children are now. They are the new gas-manager's children.

CRILLY. He's a Scotchman.

ANNA. And married for the second time. Mother, Mrs. Dunne is going to the races. Such a sketch of a hat.

MRS. CRILLY. It would be better for her if she stayed at home and looked after her business.

ANNA. She won't have much business to look after soon. That's the third time her husband has come out of Farrell's public-house.

CRILLY. He's drinking with the Dispensary Doctor. Companions! They're the curse of this town, Marianne. [*He sits down*]

ANNA. She's walked into a blind man, hat and all. He's from the Workhouse.

CRILLY. He's the blind piper out of the Workhouse, Myles Gorman.

MRS. CRILLY. There's no one within. You should go into the shop, Anna.

ANNA. Yes, mother. [*She crosses*] James Scollard is coming in, mother.

MRS. CRILLY. Very well, Anna. Stay in the shop until Mary comes.

[ANNA *goes into the shop.* CRILLY *moves about*]

MRS. CRILLY. You're very uneasy.

CRILLY. Yes, I am uneasy, Marianne. There's some presentment on me. Fifty pounds a year is a good pension for the old man. He's a month out now. He ought to be getting an instalment.

[ANNA *comes in from shop*]

ANNA. Mother, the doctor's daughter is in the shop.

MRS. CRILLY. What does she want?

ANNA [*imitating an accent*]. Send up a pound of butter, two pounds of sugar, and a pound of tea.

MRS. CRILLY. These people are paying nobody. But we can't refuse her. I suppose we'll have to send them up. Be very distant with her, Anna.

ANNA. I've kept her waiting. Here's a letter, mother.

MRS. CRILLY [*taking letter*]. When did it come, Anna?

ANNA. It's just handed in.

[ANNA *goes out.* MRS. CRILLY *opens letter*]

MRS. CRILLY. It's from the bank. They want me to call. What does the bank manager want with me, I wonder?

CRILLY. I have something to tell you, Marianne. I'll tell you in a while.

[*He takes a turn up and down*]

MRS. CRILLY. What do you want to tell me?

CRILLY. Prepare your mind, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. What is it?

CRILLY. I owe you money, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. Money! How do you owe me money?

CRILLY. That cute boy, James Covey, who took in all the town —

MRS. CRILLY [*rising*]. Covey! My God! You backed a bill for him?

CRILLY. I'll make a clean breast of it. I did.

MRS. CRILLY [*with fear in her eyes*]. How much is it?

CRILLY [*walking away to window*]. I'll come to that, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. Did any one back the bill with you?

CRILLY. I obliged the fellow. No one backed the bill with me.

MRS. CRILLY. Does any one know of it?

CRILLY. No, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. The bank. . . . Tell me what happened.

CRILLY. The bank manager sent for me when he came to the town after Covey cleared.

MRS. CRILLY. We had four hundred pounds in the bank.

CRILLY. We had, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. Tell me how much was the bill.

CRILLY. There's no use in beating about the bush. The bill was for three hundred pounds.

MRS. CRILLY. And what has the bank done?

CRILLY. I'm sorry to say, Marianne, the bank has taken the money over from our account.

MRS. CRILLY. You've ruined us at last, Crofton Crilly.

CRILLY. You should never forgive me, Marianne. I'll go to America and begin life again.

[*He turns to go out by shop*]

MRS. CRILLY. We have no money left.

CRILLY. A hundred pounds, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. That's Anna's money.

CRILLY. Scollard should be satisfied.

MRS. CRILLY. Anna insists on getting her money.

CRILLY. Very well, Marianne. I'll leave it all to yourself.

[JAMES SCOLLARD *comes in.* ANNA *is behind him.* SCOLLARD *has an account book in his hand*]

SCOLLARD. Good morning, Mrs. Crilly. Good morning, Mr. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY. Good morning, Mr. Scollard. [CROFTON CRILLY *turns to go*]

ANNA. Don't go, father.

SCOLLARD. Don't go, Mr. Crilly. I have something particular to say to yourself and Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY. Sit down, Mr. Scollard.

[ANNA *brings chair, and* SCOLLARD *sits center.* ANNA *stands behind him.* MRS. CRILLY *sits left of him*]

Scollard. I am here to propose for the hand of your daughter, Miss Anna Crilly.

Mrs. Crilly. We have nothing to say against your proposal, Mr. Scollard.

Crilly. Won't you take something, James?

Scollard. No, thanks, Mr. Crilly. I never touch intoxicants.

[Crofton Crilly *goes into shop*]

Mrs. Crilly. We couldn't wish for a better match for Anna. But I feel bound to tell you, Mr. Scollard, that we have had a very severe loss in our business.

Anna. What is it, mother?

Mrs. Crilly. I don't mind telling you. Mr. Crilly has made himself responsible for a bill on the bank.

Scollard. In whose interest, Mrs. Crilly?

Mrs. Crilly. He backed a bill for James Covey. A bill for three hundred pounds.

Anna. Oh, mother!

Mrs. Crilly. It's a dead sure loss. I don't know what we are to do, Anna.

Scollard. This is very bad, Mrs. Crilly.

[Crofton Crilly *comes back from shop. He brings in a glass of whisky. He puts whisky on chimney-piece*]

Mrs. Crilly. The bank has taken over three hundred pounds from our account.

Crilly. Perhaps Scollard —

Scollard. What were you saying, Mr. Crilly?

Crilly. Oh, I was just thinking — about a bill you know — If some one would go security for us at the bank —

Anna. Father, what are you saying?

Mrs. Crilly. It's unnecessary to talk like that. In spite of your foolishness, we still have a balance at the bank.

Anna. My portion comes to me from my grandmother.

Scollard. May I ask, Mrs. Crilly, is Miss Crilly's portion safe?

Mrs. Crilly. It is safe, Mr. Scollard.

Scollard. I have been definitely appointed Master of the Union, and I may say that Anna and myself are anxious to marry.

Mrs. Crilly. It needn't be soon, Mr. Scollard.

Scollard. After Easter, Mrs. Crilly.

Mrs. Crilly. But that's very soon.

Scollard. I am anxious to settle down, Mrs. Crilly. I'm on my way to a meeting of the Board of Guardians, but before I go I'd like to have some more information about your loss.

Mrs. Crilly. Anna's portion is not touched, but we could hardly afford to let the money go from us now.

Scollard. Is that so, Mrs. Crilly?

Mrs. Crilly. Three hundred pounds is a very severe loss.

Scollard. Very severe, indeed. Still, you understand, Mrs. Crilly, the difficulties of taking such a step as marriage without adequate provision.

Crilly. Damn it all, man, Marianne and myself married without anything at all.

Mrs. Crilly [*bitterly*]. Anna won't be such a fool as her mother.

Crilly. Well, Scollard has his position, and we helped him to it.

Scollard. I acknowledge that.

Anna. Isn't my portion eighty pounds, mother?

Mrs. Crilly. Yes, Anna. But I'd like to tell Mr. Scollard that it would come as a strain on us to let the money go at once.

Scollard. I daresay, Mrs. Crilly.

Anna. But, mother, wouldn't the money be safer with us?

Mrs. Crilly. Well, I leave the whole thing in the hands of Mr. Scollard.

Scollard. Anna and myself have been talking things over, Mrs. Crilly.

Anna. And we don't want to begin life in a poor way.

Scollard. We see the advantage of being always solvent, Mrs. Crilly.

Anna. James has ambitions, and there's no reason why he shouldn't venture for the post of Secretary of the County Council when old Mr. Dobbs retires.

Scollard. In a few years, Mrs. Crilly, when I had more official experience and some reputation.

Anna. Then he would have seven or eight hundred a year.

Scollard. As I said, a man like myself would want to be in a perfectly solvent position.

Anna. Besides, James has no money of his own.

Scollard. I never had the chance of putting money by — Family calls, Mrs. Crilly.

Anna. And we don't want to begin life in a poor way.

MRS. CRILLY. You won't want the whole of the money. I'll give you forty pounds now.

CRILLY. And forty when the first child is born.

ANNA. Oh, father, how can you say such a thing?

SCOLLARD. I need only say this. Anna and myself were talking over affairs, and we came to the conclusion it would be best not to start with less than eighty pounds. [*He rises*] I have to go down to the Board Room now, for there is a meeting of the Guardians.

[*He goes towards door*]

CRILLY. Won't you take a glass?

SCOLLARD. No, thanks, Mr. Crilly. I never touch stimulants. Good day to you all.

[*He goes out.* CROFTON CRILLY *goes after him*]

MRS. CRILLY. Anna, you won't be deprived of your money.

ANNA. Then what's the difficulty, mother?

MRS. CRILLY. Let half of the money remain with us for a while.

ANNA. But, mother, if I don't get all my money, what security have I that what's left will be good in six months or a year?

MRS. CRILLY. I'll watch the money for you, Anna.

ANNA. It's hard to keep a hold on money in a town where business is going down.

MRS. CRILLY. Forty pounds will be given to you and forty pounds will be kept safe for you.

ANNA. Forty pounds! There's not a small farmer comes into the shop but his daughter has more of a dowry than forty pounds.

MRS. CRILLY. Think of all who marry without a dowry at all.

ANNA. You wouldn't have me go to James Scollard without a dowry?

MRS. CRILLY. Well, you know the way we're situated. If you insist on getting eighty pounds we'll have to make an overdraft on the bank, and, in the way business is, I don't know how we'll ever recover it.

ANNA. There won't be much left out of eighty pounds when we get what suits us in furniture.

MRS. CRILLY. I could let you have some furniture.

ANNA. No, mother. We want to start in a way that is different from this house.

MRS. CRILLY. You'll want all the money together?

ANNA. All of it, mother.

MRS. CRILLY. You'll have to get it so. But you're very hard, Anna.

ANNA. This house would teach any one to look to themselves.

MRS. CRILLY. Come upstairs. [ANNA *goes, left*] Three hundred pounds of a loss. Eighty pounds with that. I'm terrified when I think.

[*She goes after* ANNA]

[CROFTON CRILLY *comes in from shop. He takes glass of whisky from table, and sits down in armchair*]

CRILLY. I don't know what Marianne's to do at all. She has a shocking lot to contend with. Can anything be got from the old man, I wonder?

[ALBERT CRILLY *comes in by door, left*]

ALBERT. Well, pa.

CRILLY. Well, Albert. What's the news in the town, Albert?

ALBERT. They say that you've backed a bill for Covey.

CRILLY. If your mother hears that kind of talk she'll be vexed, Albert.

ALBERT. But did you back the bill?

CRILLY. For Heaven's sake, let me alone, Albert. Yes, I backed the bill.

ALBERT. How much?

CRILLY. You'll hear all about it from your mother.

ALBERT. They say the bill was for three hundred.

CRILLY. It was three or thereabouts.

ALBERT. 'Pon my word, father, the mother will have to take out a mandamus against you.

CRILLY [*with parental dignity*]. Don't talk to me in that way, Sir.

ALBERT. It's scandalous, really. I expect you've ruined the business.

CRILLY. I hate the world and all its works and pomps.

ALBERT. I believe you've done for the business. I'm going away.

CRILLY. Then you've got the other appointment?

ALBERT. Temporary clerkship in the Land Department. I wonder would the mother let me have the money for clothes?

CRILLY [*desperately*]. Don't mention it at all to her.

ALBERT. I have a card from a Dublin tailor in my pocket. If I could pay him for one suit, I could get another on tick.

CRILLY. I tell you not to talk to your mother about money. That fellow, Scollard, has put her out.

ALBERT. How's that?

CRILLY. Money again. Wants the whole of Anna's portion down. And Anna's backing him up, too. I don't know how your mother can stand it. I don't like Scollard. Then you won't be staying on, Albert, to do the stock-taking in the Workhouse?

ALBERT. No; they'll have to get some one else. I'm glad to be out of that job.

CRILLY. I'm not sorry, Albert.

ALBERT. The mother would expect me to do something queer in my report.

CRILLY. Between you and me, Albert, women aren't acquainted with the working of affairs, and they expect unusual things to happen. Who will they make stocktaker, now?

ALBERT. Young Dobbs, likely. I suppose the whole business about the coal will come out then?

CRILLY. I suppose it will; but say nothing about it now, Albert. Let the hare sit.

ALBERT. What does the old man think about it now?

CRILLY. He's very close to himself. I think he has forgotten all about it.

ALBERT. I wouldn't say so.

CRILLY. Who's that in the shop, Albert?

ALBERT. Felix Tournour.

CRILLY [*rising*]. I wonder what they think about Scollard in the Poorhouse.

[*He and* ALBERT *go into the shop as* MUSKERRY *enters from left*]

[MUSKERRY *is untidily dressed. His boots are unlaced. He walks across the room and speaks pettishly*]

MUSKERRY. They haven't brought my soup yet. They won't give much of their time to me. I'm disappointed in Anna Crilly. Well, a certain share in this shop was to have gone to Anna Crilly. I'll get that share, and I'll hoard it up myself. I'll hoard it up. And the fifty pounds of my pension, I'll hoard that up, too.

[ALBERT *comes in from shop*]

MUSKERRY. That's a black fire that's in the grate. I don't like the coal that comes into this place.

ALBERT. Coal, eh, grandpapa.

MUSKERRY. I said coal.

ALBERT. We haven't good stores here.

MUSKERRY. Confound you for your insolence.

ALBERT. Somebody you know is in the shop — Felix Tournour.

MUSKERRY. Bid Tournour come in to me.

ALBERT [*talking into the shop*]. You're wanted here, Tournour. Come in now or I'll entertain the boss with "The Devil's Rambles." [*He turns to* MUSKERRY] I was given the job of stock-taking.

MUSKERRY. That's a matter for yourself.

ALBERT. I don't think I'll take the job now.

MUSKERRY. Why won't you take it?

ALBERT. I don't know what to say about the fifty tons of coal.

MUSKERRY. I was too precipitate about the coal. But don't have me at the loss of fifty pounds through any of your smartness.

ALBERT. All right, grandfather; I'll see you through.

MUSKERRY. Confound you for a puppy.

[FELIX TOURNOUR *enters. He looks prosperous. He has on a loud check suit. He wears a red tie and a peaked cap*]

ALBERT. The Master wants to speak to you, Tournour.

TOURNOUR. What Master?

ALBERT. The boss, Tournour, the boss.

MUSKERRY. I want you, and that's enough for you, Tournour.

ALBERT. I suppose you don't know, grandpapa, that Tournour has a middling high position in the Poorhouse now.

MUSKERRY. What are you saying?

ALBERT. Tournour is Ward-master now.

MUSKERRY. I wasn't given any notice of that.

ALBERT. Eh, Tournour —

"The Devil went out for a ramble at night,
Through Garrisowen Union to see every sight.
He saw Felix Tournour —

TOURNOUR.

"He saw one in comfort, of that you'll be sure.
With his back to the fire stands Felix Tournour."

[*He puts his back to fire*]

ALBERT. Well, so-long, gents.

[*He goes out by shop door*]

MUSKERRY. Let me see you, Tournour.

TOURNOUR. I'm plain to be seen.

MUSKERRY. Who recommended you for Ward-master?

TOURNOUR. Them that had the power.

MUSKERRY. I would not have done it, Tournour.

TOURNOUR. No. And still, d'ye see, I'm up and not down. Well, I'll be going.

MUSKERRY. Come back here, Tournour. I made it a rule that no Ward-master should let drink be brought in to the paupers.

TOURNOUR. It's a pity you're not Master still!

MUSKERRY. What are you saying?

TOURNOUR. It's a pity that you're not still the Master over us.

MUSKERRY. Tournour, you're forgetting yourself.

TOURNOUR. Well, maybe you are still the Master.

MUSKERRY. How dare you speak to me with such effrontery? How dare you?

TOURNOUR. I dunno. I'm going away now, if your *honour* has nothing more to say to me. [*He turns to go*]

MUSKERRY. You shall not. You shall not, I say.

TOURNOUR. What?

MUSKERRY. You shall not go away until you've apologised to me.

TOURNOUR. Don't be talking, Thomas Muskerry. You're not Master over me.

MUSKERRY. Not the Master over you?

TOURNOUR. No. There's an end to your sway, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. Go out of the house. No, stay here. You think I'm out of the Workhouse. No. That's not so. I've claims, great claims, on it still. Not for nothing was I there for thirty years, the pattern for the officials of Ireland.

TOURNOUR. Twenty-nine years, I'm telling you.

MUSKERRY. The Guardians will take account of me.

TOURNOUR. And maybe they would, too.

MUSKERRY. What's that you're saying?

TOURNOUR. The Guardians might take an account of Thomas Muskerry in a way he mightn't like.

[*He goes to door*]

MUSKERRY. Come back here, Felix Tournour.

TOURNOUR. I'm not your sub-servant.

MUSKERRY. Stand here before me.

TOURNOUR. You and your before me! Your back to heaven and your belly to hell.

MUSKERRY. Go away. Go away out of this.

TOURNOUR. Don't try to down-face me. I know something about you.

MUSKERRY. About me!

TOURNOUR. Aye, you and your fifty tons of coal. [MUSKERRY *goes back from him*] Great claims on the Workhouse have you. The Guardians will take account of you. Will they? Talk to them about the fifty tons of coal. Go and do that, my pattern of the officials of Ireland!

[TOURNOUR *goes out by shop.* MUSKERRY *stands with his hands on the armchair*]

MUSKERRY. This minute I'll go down to the Guardians and make my complaint. [*He notices his appearance*] I'm going about all day with my boots unlaced. I'm falling into bad ways, bad, slovenly ways. And my coat needs brushing, too. [*He takes off his coat and goes to window and brushes it*] That's Myles Gorman going back to the Workhouse. I couldn't walk with my head held as high as that. In this house I am losing my uprightness. I'll do more than lace my boots and brush my coat. I'll go down to the Guardians and I'll pay them back their fifty pounds.

[ANNA CRILLY *comes in from left with a bowl of soup*]

ANNA. Here's your soup, grandpapa.

MUSKERRY. I can't take it now, Anna. [*He puts on his coat*]

ANNA. Are you going out, grandpapa?

MUSKERRY. I'm going before the meeting of the Board of Guardians.

ANNA. Are you, grandpapa?

MUSKERRY. Yes, Anna, I am. I'm going to pay them back their fifty pounds.

ANNA. And have you the fifty pounds?

MUSKERRY. Your mother has it for me.

ANNA. Sit down, grandpapa, and take your soup.

MUSKERRY. No, Anna, I won't take anything until my mind is at rest about the coal. A certain person has spoken to me in a way I'll never submit to be spoken to again.

[MRS. CRILLY *comes in*]

MRS. CRILLY. What has happened to you?

MUSKERRY. Felix Tournour knows about the coal, Marianne. He can disgrace me before the world.

ANNA. And grandpapa wants to go before the Guardians and pay them back the fifty pounds.

MRS. CRILLY. Wait until we consult Mr. Scollard. [ANNA *goes out*]

MUSKERRY. No, Marianne. I'm not going to be a party to this any longer. I'm going before the Guardians, and I'll pay them back their fifty pounds.

MRS. CRILLY. Fifty pounds. From what place is fifty pounds to come so easily?

MUSKERRY. I'll ask you to give me the fifty pounds, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. I'll do no such thing. Anna is getting married, and she claims her fortune.

MUSKERRY. Anna getting married. This was kept from me. And who is Anna getting married to?

MRS. CRILLY. To James Scollard.

MUSKERRY. To James Scollard. And so Anna is getting married to my successor, James Scollard. My successor. How well I knew there was some such scheme behind shifting me out of the Workhouse. And Anna Crilly was against me all the time. Well, well, well. I'll remember this.

MRS. CRILLY. I'm at great losses since you came here.

MUSKERRY. I'm at greater losses, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY. What losses are you at?

MUSKERRY. The loss of my trust, the loss of my dignity, my self-respect, and —

MRS. CRILLY. I think we did all we could for you.

MUSKERRY. I'm going out now to pay back the Guardians the sum due to them from me. I want fifty pounds from you. I claim it, and I have a right to claim it.

MRS. CRILLY. We have no money at all. Listen. Crofton Crilly backed a bill for James Covey, and three hundred pounds has been taken from our account.

MUSKERRY. Three hundred pounds!

MRS. CRILLY. Yes. Three hundred pounds.

MUSKERRY. He backed a bill for three hundred pounds. And do you think, Marianne Crilly, there can be any luck, in a house where such a thing could happen? I tell you there is no luck nor grace in your house. [*He puts on his hat and goes to cupboard to get his stick. He opens the cupboard. He turns round. Greatly moved*]. My God, my God. I'm made cry at the things that happen in this house.

MRS. CRILLY. What is it?

MUSKERRY. The good meat I brought in. There it is on the floor and the cat mangling it. I'll go out of this house, and I'll never put foot into it again.

MRS. CRILLY. And where will you go?

MUSKERRY. I'll go before the Board of Guardians and I'll ask them to provide for me.

MRS. CRILLY. What do you want me to do for you?

MUSKERRY. Give me fifty pounds, so that I can pay them off now.

MRS. CRILLY. Haven't I told you the way I'm straitened for money?

MUSKERRY. You have still in the bank what would save my name.

MRS. CRILLY. Don't be unreasonable. I have to provide for my children.

MUSKERRY. Your children. Yes, you have to provide for your children. I provided for them long enough. And now you would take my place, my honour, and my self-respect, and provide for them over again. [*He goes out*]

MRS. CRILLY. I'll have to put up with this, too.

[ANNA *re-enters*]

ANNA. Where has he gone, mother?

MRS. CRILLY. He has gone down to the Workhouse.

ANNA. What is he going to do, mother?

MRS. CRILLY. He says he will ask the Guardians to provide for him.

ANNA. It's not likely they'll do that for a man with a pension of fifty pounds a year.

MRS. CRILLY. I don't know what will happen to us.

ANNA. He'll come back, mother.

MRS. CRILLY. He will. But everything will have been made public, and the money will have to be paid.

ANNA [*at the window*]. There he is going down the street, mother.

MRS. CRILLY. Which way?

ANNA. Towards the Workhouse. And here's the doctor's daughter coming into the shop again, mother.

MRS. CRILLY. I'll go out and see her myself. [*As she goes out she hands* ANNA *a cheque*] That's the last cheque I'll be able to make out. There's your eighty pounds, Anna.

[*She goes into the shop*]

ANNA. We can begin to get the furniture now.

[*She sits down at the table and makes some calculation with a pencil*]

[CURTAIN]

ACT III

The infirm ward in the Workhouse. Entrance from corridor, right. Forward, left, are three beds with bedding folded upon them. Back, left, is a door leading into Select Ward. This door is closed, and a large key is in lock. Fireplace with a grating around it, left. Back, right, is a window with little leaded panes.

It is noon on a May day, but the light inside the ward is feeble.

Two paupers are seated at fire. One of them, MICKIE CRIPES, *is a man of fifty, stooped and hollow-chested, but with quick blue eyes. The other man,* TOM SHANLEY, *is not old, but he looks broken and listless.* MYLES GORMAN, *still in pauper dress, is standing before window, an expectant look on his face.*

THOMAS MUSKERRY *enters from corridor. He wears his own clothes, but he has let them get into disorder. His hair and beard are disordered, and he seems very much broken down. Nevertheless, he looks as if his mind were composed.*

MUSKERRY. It's dark in here, Michael.

CRIPES. It is, sir.

MUSKERRY. I find it very spiritless after coming up from the chapel. Don't pass your whole day here. Go down into the yard. [*He stands before the window*] This is the first fine day, and you ought to go out along the country road. Ask the Master for leave. It's the month of May, and you'll be glad of the sight of the grass and the smell of the bushes. Now here's a remarkable thing. I venture to think that the like of this has never happened before. Here are the bees swarming at the window pane.

GORMAN. You'll hear my pipes on the road to-day. That's as sure as the right hand is on my body.

[*He goes out by corridor door*]

CRIPES. Myles Gorman must have been glad to hear that buzzing.

MUSKERRY. Why was Myles glad to hear it?

SHANLEY. He was leaving on the first fine day.

CRIPES. The buzzing at the pane would let any one know that the air is nice for a journey.

MUSKERRY. I am leaving to-day, myself.

CRIPES. And where are you going, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY. I'm going to a place of my own.

[MUSKERRY *goes into the Select Ward*]

CRIPES. I'll tell you what brought Thomas Muskerry back to the Workhouse to be an inmate in it. Living in a bad house. Living with his own. That's what brought him back. And that's what left me here, too.

SHANLEY [*listlessly*]. The others have the flour, and we may hawk the bran.

[*An* OLD PAUPER *comes into the ward. His face looks bleached. He has the handle of a sweeping-brush for a staff. He moves about the ward, muttering to himself. He seats himself on chair, right*]

THE OLD MAN [*speaking as if thinking aloud*]. I was at twelve o'clock Mass. Now one o'clock would be a late Mass. I was at Mass at one o'clock. Wouldn't that be a long time to keep a priest, and he fasting the whole time?

CRIPES. I'll tell you what Thomas Muskerry did when he left the bad house he was in.

[*He puts coal on the fire*]

THE OLD MAN. I was at one o'clock Mass in Skibbereen. I know where Skibbereen is well. In the County

Cork. Cork is a big county. As big as Dublin and Wicklow. That's where the people died when there was the hunger.

CRIPES. He came before the meeting of the Guardians, and he told them he owed them the whole of his year's pension. Then he got some sort of a stroke, and he broke down. And the Guardians gave him the Select Ward there for himself.

SHANLEY. They did well for him.

CRIPES. Why wouldn't they give him the Select Ward? It's right that he'd get the little room, and not have to make down the pauper's bed with the rest of us.

SHANLEY. He was at the altar to-day, and he stayed in the chapel after Mass.

CRIPES. He'll be here shortly.

THE OLD MAN. Skibbereen! That's where the people died when there was the hunger. Men and women without coffins, or even their clothes off. Just buried. Skibbereen I remember well, for I was a whole man then. And the village. For there are people living in it yet. They didn't all die.

SHANLEY. We'll have somebody else in the Select Ward this evening.

CRIPES. That's what they were talking about. The nuns are sending a patient up here.

SHANLEY. I suppose the Ward-master will be in here to regulate the room. [*He rises*]

CRIPES. Aye, the Ward-master. Felix Tournour, the Ward-master. You've come to your own place at last, Felix Tournour.

SHANLEY. Felix Tournour will be coming the master over me if he finds me here. [SHANLEY *goes out*]

CRIPES. Felix Tournour! That's the lad that will be coming in with his head up like the gander that's after beating down a child.

[CHRISTY CLARKE *enters. He carries a little portmanteau*]

CHRISTY. Is Mr. Muskerry here?

CRIPES. He's in the room. [*A sound of water splashing and the movements of a heavy person are heard*] Will you be speaking with him, young fellow?

CHRISTY. I will.

CRIPES. Tell him, like a good little boy, that the oul' men would be under a favour to him if he left a bit of tobacco. You won't forget that?

CHRISTY. I won't forget it.

CRIPES. I don't want to be in the way of Felix Tournour. We're going down to the yard, but we'll see Mr. Muskerry when he's going away. [CRIPES *goes out*]

MUSKERRY [*within*]. Is that you, Christy Clarke?

CHRISTY. It is, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. Have you any news, Christy?

CHRISTY. No news, except that my mother is in the cottage, and is expecting you to-day.

MUSKERRY. I'll be in the cottage to-day, Christy. I'm cleaning myself. [*A sound of splashing and moving about*] The Guardians were good to get the little house for me. I'd as lieve be there as in a mansion. There's about half an acre of land to the place, and I'll do work on the ground from time to time, for it's a good thing for a man to get the smell of the clay.

CHRISTY. And how are you in health, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY. I'm very well in health. I was anointed, you know, and after that I mended miraculously.

CHRISTY. And what about the pension?

MUSKERRY. I'm getting three hundred pounds. They asked me to realize the pension. I hope I have life enough before me.

[*He comes out. He has on trousers, coat, and starched shirt. The shirt is soiled and crushed*]

MUSKERRY. On Saturdays I'll do my marketing. I'll come into the town, and I'll buy the bit of meat for my dinner on Sunday. But what are you doing with this portmanteau, Christy?

CHRISTY. I'm going away myself.

MUSKERRY. To a situation, is it?

CHRISTY. To a situation in Dublin.

MUSKERRY. I wish you luck, Christy. [*He shakes hands with the boy, and sits down on a chair*] I was dreaming on new things all last night. New shirts, new sheets, everything new.

CHRISTY. I want to be something.

MUSKERRY. What do you want to be?

CHRISTY. A writer.

MUSKERRY. A writer of books, is it?

CHRISTY. Yes, a writer of books.

MUSKERRY. Listen, now, and tell me do you hear anything. That's the sound of bees swarming at the window. That's a good augury for you, Christy.

CHRISTY. All life's before me.

MUSKERRY. Will you give heed to what I tell you?

CHRISTY. I'll give heed to it, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. Live a good life.

CHRISTY. I give heed to you.

MUSKERRY. Your mother had great hardship in rearing you.

CHRISTY. I know that, Mr. Muskerry, but now I'm able for the world.

MUSKERRY. I wish success to all your efforts. Be very careful of your personal appearance.

CHRISTY. I will, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. Get yourself a new cravat before you leave the town.

CHRISTY. I'll get it.

MUSKERRY. I think I'd look better myself if I had a fresher shirt.

CHRISTY. I saw clean shirts of yours before the fire last night in my mother's house.

MUSKERRY. I wish I could get one before I leave this place.

CHRISTY. Will I run off and get one for you?

MUSKERRY. Would you, Christy? Would it be too much trouble?

[MUSKERRY *rises*]

CHRISTY. I'll go now.

MUSKERRY. You're a very willing boy, Christy, and you're sure to get on. [*He goes to a little broken mirror on the wall*] I am white and loose of flesh, and that's not a good sign with me, Christy. I'll tell you something. If I were staying here to-night, it's the pauper's bed I'd have to sleep on.

[MRS. CRILLY *comes to the door*]

MRS. CRILLY. Well, I see you're making ready for your departure.

MUSKERRY [*who has become uneasy*]. I am ready for my departure.

MRS. CRILLY. And this young man has come for you, I suppose?

MUSKERRY. This young man is minding his own business.

CHRISTY. I'm going out now to get a shirt for the Master.

MRS. CRILLY. A starched shirt, I suppose, Christy. Go down to our house, and tell Mary to give you one of the shirts that are folded up.

MUSKERRY. The boy will go where he was bid go.

MRS. CRILLY. Oh, very well. Run, Christy, and do the message for the Master. [CHRISTY CLARKE *goes out*]

MUSKERRY. I don't know what brought you here to-day.

MRS. CRILLY. Well, I wanted to see you.

MUSKERRY. You could come to see me when I was settled down.

MRS. CRILLY. Settled in the cottage the Guardians have given you?

MUSKERRY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. CRILLY [*with nervous excitement, restrained*]. No one of us will ever go near the place.

MUSKERRY. Well, you'll please yourself.

MRS. CRILLY. You put a slight on us all when you go there to live.

MUSKERRY. Well, I've lived with you to my own loss.

MRS. CRILLY. Our house is the best house in the town, and I'm the nearest person to you.

MUSKERRY. Say nothing more about that.

MRS. CRILLY. Well, maybe you do right not to live with us, but you ought not to forsake us altogether.

MUSKERRY. And what do you mean by forsaking you altogether?

MRS. CRILLY. When you leave the place and do not even turn your step in our direction it's a sign to all who want to know that you forsake us altogether.

MUSKERRY. What do you want me to do?

MRS. CRILLY. Come up to Cross Street with me, have dinner and spend the night with us. People would have less to talk about if you did that.

MUSKERRY. You always have a scheme.

MRS. CRILLY. Come to us for this evening itself.

MUSKERRY. I wish you wouldn't trouble me, woman. Can't you see that when I go out of this I want to go to my own place?

MRS. CRILLY. You can go there to-morrow.

MUSKERRY. Preparations are made for me.

MRS. CRILLY. You don't know what preparations.

MUSKERRY. Two pounds of the best beef-steak were ordered to be sent up to-day.

MRS. CRILLY. I wouldn't trust that woman, Mrs. Clarke, to cook potatoes.

MUSKERRY. Well, I'll trust her, ma'am.

MRS. CRILLY [*taking* MUSKERRY'S *sleeve*]. Don't go to-day, anyway.

MUSKERRY. You're very anxious

to get me to come with you. What do you want from me?

MRS. CRILLY. We want nothing from you. You know how insecure our business is. When it's known in the town that you forsake us, everybody will close in on us.

MUSKERRY. God knows I did everything that a man could do for you and yours. I won't forget you. I haven't much life left to me, and I want to live to myself.

MRS. CRILLY. I know. Sure I lie awake at night, too tired to sleep, and long to get away from the things that are pressing in on me. I know that people are glad of their own way, and glad to live in the way that they like. When I heard the birds stirring I cried to be away in some place where I won't hear the thing that's always knocking at my head. The business has to be minded, and it's slipping away from us like water. And listen, if my confinement comes on me and I worried as I was last year, nothing can save me. I'll die, surely.

MUSKERRY [*moved*]. What more do you want me to do?

MRS. CRILLY. Stay with us for a while, so that we'll have the name of your support.

MUSKERRY. I'll come back to you in a week.

MRS. CRILLY. That wouldn't do at all. There's a reason for what I ask. The town must know that you are with us from the time you leave this.

MUSKERRY [*with emotion*]. God help me with you all, and God direct me what to do.

MRS. CRILLY. It's not in you to let us down.

[MUSKERRY *turns away. His head is bent.* MRS. CRILLY *goes to him*]

MUSKERRY. Will you never be done taking from me? I want to leave this and go to a place of my own.

[MUSKERRY *puts his hand to his eyes. When he lowers his hand again* MRS. CRILLY *lays hers in it.* CHRISTY CLARKE *comes in.* MUSKERRY *turns to him.* MUSKERRY *has been crying*]

MUSKERRY. Well, Christy, I'll be sending you back on another message.

[MRS. CRILLY *makes a sign to* CHRISTY *not to speak*]

MUSKERRY. Go to your mother and tell her —

CHRISTY. I met my mother outside.

MUSKERRY. Did she get the things that were sent to her?

CHRISTY. My mother was sent away from the cottage.

MUSKERRY. Who sent your mother away from the cottage?

CHRISTY. Mrs. Crilly sent her away.

MUSKERRY. And why did you do that, ma'am?

MRS. CRILLY. I sent Mary to help to prepare the place for you, and the woman was impertinent to Mary —

MUSKERRY. Well, ma'am?

MRS. CRILLY. I sent the woman away.

MUSKERRY. And so you take it on yourself to dispose of the servants in my house?

MRS. CRILLY. I daresay you'll take the woman's part against my daughter.

MUSKERRY. No, ma'am, I'll take no one's side, but I'll tell you this. I want my own life, and I won't be interfered with.

MRS. CRILLY. I'm sorry for what occurred, and I'll apologise to the boy's mother if you like.

MUSKERRY. I won't be interfered with, I tell you. From this day out I'm free of my own life. And now, Christy Clarke, go downstairs and tell the Master, Mr. Scollard, that I want to see him.

[CHRISTY CLARKE *goes out*]

MRS. CRILLY. I may as well tell you something else. None of the things you ordered were sent up to the cottage.

MUSKERRY. Do you tell me that?

MRS. CRILLY. I went round to the shop, and everything you ordered was sent to us.

MUSKERRY. And what is the meaning of that, ma'am?

MRS. CRILLY. If the town knew you were going from us, in a week we would have to put up the shutters.

MUSKERRY. Well, I'll walk out of this, and when I come to the road I'll go my own way.

MRS. CRILLY. We can't prevent you.

MUSKERRY. No, ma'am, you can't prevent me.

MRS. CRILLY. You've got your discharge, I suppose?

MUSKERRY. I've given three hours' notice, and I'll get my discharge now.

MRS. CRILLY [*at corridor door*]. We can't prevent you going if you have the doctor's discharge.

MUSKERRY. The doctor's discharge! He would have given it to me —

MRS. CRILLY. You can't leave without the doctor's sanction.

MUSKERRY. Out of this house I will go to-day. [JAMES SCOLLARD *enters*]

SCOLLARD. I believe you want to see me, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. I do, Mr. Scollard. I am leaving the house.

SCOLLARD. I will be glad to take up the necessary formalities for you, Mr. Muskerry.

MRS. CRILLY. First of all, has the doctor marked my father off the infirmary list?

SCOLLARD. No, Mrs. Crilly. Now that I recall the list, he has not.

MUSKERRY. I waited after Mass to-day, and I missed seeing him.

MRS. CRILLY. My father was seriously ill only a short time ago, and I do not believe he is in a fit state to leave the infirmary.

SCOLLARD. That certainly has to be considered. Without the doctor explicitly sending you down to the body of the house you are hardly under my jurisdiction, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. Mr. Scollard, I ask you to give me leave to go out of the Workhouse for a day. You can do this on your own responsibility.

MRS. CRILLY. In the present state of his mind it's not likely he would return to-night. Then if anything happened him your situation is at stake.

MUSKERRY. I'm not a pauper. I'll go out of this to-day without leave or license from any of you.

SCOLLARD. As you know yourself, Mr. Muskerry, it would be as much as my situation is worth to let you depart in that way.

MUSKERRY. Well, go I will.

SCOLLARD. I cannot permit it, Mr. Muskerry. I say it with the greatest respect.

MUSKERRY. How long will you keep me here?

SCOLLARD. Until the doctor visits the house.

MUSKERRY. That will be on Monday morning.

SCOLLARD. And this is Saturday, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY. And where will you put me until Monday?

SCOLLARD. Other arrangements will be made for you.

MUSKERRY. It's the pauper's bed you would give me!

SCOLLARD. The old arrangements will continue. Can I do anything further for you, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY. No, you can do nothing further for me. It's a great deal you have done for me! It's the pauper's bed you have given me!

[*He goes into the Select Ward*]

MRS. CRILLY. Sit down, Mr. Scollard. I want to speak to you.

[MRS. CRILLY *seats herself at the table.* SCOLLARD *sits down also*]

MRS. CRILLY. The bank manager is in the town to-day, and there are people waiting to tell him whether my father goes to our house or goes away from us.

SCOLLARD. No doubt there are, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY. But you have nothing to do with that, Mr. Scollard.

SCOLLARD. No, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY. I have my own battle to fight, and a hard battle it is. I have to make bits of myself to mind everything and be prepared for everything.

SCOLLARD. No doubt, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY. There are people who will blame me, but they cannot see into my mind.

SCOLLARD. Will you come down to the parlour, Mrs. Crilly?

MRS. CRILLY. Yes, I'll go down.

[*She remains seated, looking out steadily before her.* MYLES GORMAN *comes in. He is dressed in his own clothes*]

SCOLLARD. Well, Gorman, what brings you back to the ward?

GORMAN. I just want to do something to my pipes, Master.

SCOLLARD. Very well, Gorman. You have your discharge, and you are free to leave.

GORMAN. Oh, in a while I'll be taking the road.

[*He seats himself at the fire and begins to fix the bag of his pipes*]

SCOLLARD. Now, Mrs. Crilly, come down to the parlour.

MRS. CRILLY. Yes.

SCOLLARD. Anna is waiting to see you.

MRS. CRILLY [*rising*]. He will be well cared for here.

SCOLLARD. He will, Mrs. Crilly. I will give him all attention.

MRS. CRILLY. He expected to be in a different place to-day, but delay does little harm.

SCOLLARD. Come down to the parlour, Mrs. Crilly, and drink a glass of wine with us.

[*They go out. The door of the Select Ward opens, and* THOMAS MUSKERRY *appears. He has got a stroke. His breathing makes a noise in his mouth. As he moves he lags somewhat at the right knee. He carries his right hand at his breast. He moves slowly across ward.* FELIX TOURNOUR *enters, carrying a bunch of keys*]

TOURNOUR. And where are you going?

MUSKERRY [*in a thickened voice*]. Ow — out.

[*Motioning with left hand. He moves across ward, and goes out on door of corridor*]

TOURNOUR. Well, you're not getting back to your snuggery, my oul' cod. [*He goes into the Select Ward and begins to pitch* MUSKERRY'S *belongings into the outer ward. First of all come the pillows and clothes off the bed*] And there's your holy picture, and there's your holy book. [*He comes out holding another book in official binding. He opens it and reads*] "Marianne, born May the 20th, 1870." [*He turns back some pages and reads*] Thomas Muskerry wrote this, 1850 —

"In the pleasant month of May,
When the lambkins sport and play,
As I roved out for recreation,
I spied a comely maid,
Sequestered in the shade,
And on her beauty I gazed in admiration.

"I said I greatly fear
That Mercury will draw near,
As once he appeared unto Venus,
Or as it might have been
To the Carthaginian Queen,
Or the Grecian Wight called Polyphemus."

[MUSKERRY *comes back to the ward. He stands looking stupidly at the heap* TOURNOUR *has thrown out.* TOURNOUR *throws down the book.* MUSKERRY *goes towards the open door of the ward.* FELIX TOURNOUR *closes the door deliberately, turns the key and holds the key in his hand*]

TOURNOUR. You have no more to do with your snug little ward, Mr. Muskerry.

[*He puts the key on his bunch and goes out*]

MUSKERRY [*muttering with slack lips and cheeks*]. It's — it's — the pau — pauper's bed they've given me.

GORMAN [*turning round his face*]. Who's there?

MUSKERRY. It's — it's — Thomas Muskerry.

GORMAN. Is that the Master?

MUSKERRY. It's — it's the pauper's bed they've given me.

GORMAN. Can I give you any hand, Master?

MUSKERRY. I'll want to make — the bed. Give me a hand to make the bed. [GORMAN *comes over to him*] My own sheet and blanket is here. I needn't lie on a pauper's sheet. Whose bed is this?

GORMAN. It's the middle bed, Master. It's my own bed.

MUSKERRY [*helplessly*]. What bed will I take, then?

GORMAN. My bed. I won't be here.

MUSKERRY. And where are you going?

GORMAN. I'm leaving the house this day. I'll be going on the roads.

MUSKERRY. Myles — Myles Gorman. The man that was without family or friends. Myles Gorman. Help me to lay down the mattress. Where will you sleep to-night, Myles Gorman?

GORMAN. At Mrs. Muirnan's, a house between this and the town of Ballinagh. I haven't the money to pay, but she'll give me the place for to-night. Now, Master, I'll spread the sheet for you.

[*They spread the sheet on the bed*]

MUSKERRY. Can you go down the stairs, Myles Gorman? I tried to get down the stairs and my legs failed me.

GORMAN. One of the men will lead me down.

MUSKERRY [*resting his hand on the bed and standing up*]. Sure one of the men will lead me down the stairs, too.

[MYLES GORMAN *spreads blanket on bed. He stands up, takes pipes, and is ready to go out.* MUSKERRY *becomes more feeble. He puts himself on the bed*]

MUSKERRY. Myles — Myles Gorman — come back.

GORMAN. What will I do for you, Master?

MUSKERRY. Say a prayer for me.

GORMAN. What prayer will I say, Master?

MUSKERRY. Say "God be good to Thomas Muskerry."

GORMAN [*taking off his hat*]. "God be good to Thomas Muskerry, the man who was good to the poor." Is that all, Master?

MUSKERRY. That's — that's all.

[GORMAN *goes to the door*]

GORMAN. In a little while you'll hear my pipes on the road.

[*He goes out. There is the sound of heavy breathing from the bed. Then silence. The old pauper with the staff enters. He is crossing the ward when his attention is taken by the humming of the bees at the window pane. He listens for a moment*]

THE OLD PAUPER. A bright day, and the clay on their faces. That's what I saw. And we used to be coming from Mass and going to the coursing match. The hare flying and the dogs stretching after her up the hill. Fine dogs and fine men. I saw them all.

[CHRISTY CLARKE *comes in. He goes to table for his bag. He sees the figure on the bed, and goes over*]

CHRISTY. I'm going now, Mister Muskerry. Mister Muskerry! Mister Muskerry! Oh! the Master is dead. [*He runs back to the door*] Mrs. Crilly. Mrs. Crilly. [*He goes back to the bed, and throws himself on his knees*] Oh! I'm sorry you're gone, Thomas Muskerry.

THE OLD PAUPER. And is he gone home, too! And the bees humming and all! He was the best of them. Each of his brothers could lift up their plough and carry it to the other side of the field. Four of them could clear a fair. But their fields were small and poor, and so they scattered.

[MRS. CRILLY *comes in*]

MRS. CRILLY. Christy Clarke, what is it?

CHRISTY. The Master is dead.

MRS. CRILLY. My God, my God!

CHRISTY. Will I go and tell them below?

MRS. CRILLY. No. Bring no one here yet. We killed him. When everything is known that will be known.

CHRISTY. I'll never forget him, I think.

MRS. CRILLY. What humming is that?

CHRISTY. The bees at the window pane. And there's Myles Gorman's pipes on the road.

[*The clear call of the pipes is heard*]

END OF PLAY

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

(1913)

BY LORD DUNSANY

LORD DUNSANY

THOSE who are steeped in present-day drama are thoroughly aware of the true import of Lord Dunsany's work. His appeal is the natural reaction against an era of realism, of problematical approach toward the facts of life, instituted by Henrik Ibsen, self-consciously preached by Bernard Shaw, and carried to the extreme of a scientific passion by Eugene Brieux. In the stifling atmosphere of clinical examination, where the fact is lauded as against the spirit, a refreshing zephyr, carrying with it an aroma which is neither of the land nor of the sea, has brought Lord Dunsany into his own.

Many times before have we had poets and dramatists representative of moods; but we have, after heralding these peculiar geniuses, seen their moods either drag them down, or be forsaken by them for something more permanent. Therefore, instead of talking with finality about the peculiar genius of Lord Dunsany, let us take him at his face value, and say that in this first period of his, which has been untouched by the spiritual tumult of War, he represents an oasis in the desert of what has now become stagnant realism.

Lord Dunsany has not come upon us without an inheritance back of him. Apart from the fact that he is the eighteenth baron of his line, which in itself shows him well founded in Irish heraldry, after one has read his little plays it becomes clearly evident that his literary significance owes something to the Irish renaissance. We are told that he never would have thought of writing plays had it not been for the encouragement of W. B. Yeats, who will be remembered in the future quite as much for his services in giving us Synge as for his own poetic genius, displayed in the writing of "Cathleen ni Houlihan."

A reviewer, in the London *Bookman*, confesses that she approached Dunsany's "Fifty-one Tales" with a prejudice because the author was a "Lord"; but she, who had come to scoff, wrote a review sounding his praises.

The facts of Lord Dunsany's life have little to do with his genius or his point of view. His social position may have served to give him the ironical slant which is one of his most refreshing veins, and which often comes to the rescue in relieving him of a certain artificial gloom; his love of hunting, his outdoor freedom — all of these may be mingled in some way with his artistic expression. But Dunsany is a contradiction: aristocrat though he be, his sympathies are on the side of the peasant class in Ireland; fighter though he is in the cause of England, his political faith is one which cannot be entirely sympathetic with the political attitude of England. Had he not a spirit naturally concerned with art and beauty; had he not a mind pricked to a keen discernment of the follies of civilization, his is a temperament which very readily could have grown *blasé*. But there is something invigorating about Lord Dunsany, despite his detachment in all the things he writes.

Were he not Irish, with that inborn genius which the Irishman has for living in the atmosphere of unreality, once he has forsaken the real, we might declare that

Dunsany had taken the keynote of his work from Shelley's incomparable sonnet, "Ozymandias." We might further assure ourselves that, spurred by the critical impulse of Matthew Arnold, in such of his poems as "The Buried Life" and "The Future", he was seeking, in all he wrote, for the real source of life, not to be found in any located history, but in those pristine times which are characteristic of the imagination. Even as Arnold sang:

> What girl
> Now reads in her bosom as clear
> As Rebekah read, when she sate
> At eve by the palm-shaded well?
> Who guards in her breast
> As deep, as pellucid, a spring
> Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

— so does Dunsany turn away from the dull, sluggish current of life in which he finds himself, and creates not only a theogony of his own invention, but a geography of the world as well.

It is a comparatively easy matter to fall into a mood, and to give one's self up entirely to it. But Lord Dunsany's invention measures genius because of the fact that, even though his plays are lacking in the essential humanity which marks our greatest dramas, even though his gods are more irrevocable and more ironically revengeful than the Hebrew God, in their dealings with men, whatever he writes is fraught with the philosophic fervour which, though it be not original, nevertheless indicates his constant concern regarding the morals of existence.

Lord Dunsany has reigned supreme in American theatrical attention during recent years. He may be said to have come into his own in this period. A few people have been reading him since 1905, and some of his plays have graced the repertory of the Abbey Theatre since 1909. He has been a journalist, a theatre reviewer, and has published an essay on "Romance and the Modern Stage." The literary world has, therefore, had opportunity, in the past twelve years, to judge Dunsany. Yet, not until now has popularity fallen upon him. Wherever a small group of enthusiastic lovers of the play are to be found to-day, we may be certain of witnessing some amateur performance of one of Dunsany's very actable little pieces.

It is easy to sum up the general attitude of Lord Dunsany toward life. He is thoroughly convinced that machinery and the complications of modern existence have kept us from the immediate discovery of our more important life; that, to quote him, "too much information about the fads and fashions of empty lies is stealing, year by year, the traditions and simplicity even of rural people." Yet he, too, creates a machinery of drama equally as complicated.

In his mythology, "The Gods of Pegāna", he declares that wisdom is not in cities, nor is happiness to be found in wisdom; he insists that the gods, thousands of years ago, being in mirthful mood, cried out, "Let Us call up a man before Us that We may laugh in Pegāna." That is the philosophical stream permeating the dramas he has written. He is forever showing the smallness of man before the inevitable greatness of the gods of his own creation.

You find this attitude in "The Queen's Enemies", "The Gods of the Mountain", and "The Glittering Gate." Not only is this peculiar to him, but Lord Dunsany is one who does not recognize any good to man coming from life in cities.

His stories and his plays ring the persistent note of wanting to escape, as Keats would say, being "in city pent." He chants this belief in "The Tents of the Arabs"; it is the attitude which brings him much humour in that little tale he calls "The Hen."

One very quickly reaches the insistent note in Dunsany, even as one feels, after having read two or more of his plays, his insistent mood. It is dominant, whether he is reviewing a play or whether he is estimating the poetical work of others.

In 1910, he witnessed Synge's "Deirdre of the Sorrows", which was played in London, and he came away with the impression that it was not a drama native of cities; that it was too full of wonder. And to live is to wonder, according to Dunsany. "Dreams are true while they last", sang Tennyson, "and do we not live in dreams?" This is, likewise, Dunsany's question to us all. He is against the factory, and against the half-penny newspaper life. But though he himself travels continually in an unknown land, he is not blind to man's attachment to earth.

> Synge is never far away from the fields of men [he writes] — his is not the inspiration of the skylark remote from earth; our wonder at his fancy is as our wonder at the flight of the white owl low down near beautiful fields. And what things he has found there: new things even about death. There is in this play the old Greek defiance of death.

When Dunsany's enthusiasms are called into play, he is one who is willing to rate high where his affections have fallen. His critical designation is generous, and he is as eager to credit Synge with characteristics applicable to Homer as he is to measure his peasant-poet friend, Francis Ledwidge, by the same standard. After reading Ledwidge's "Lyrics", we see, not the greatness of Homer, but the simple beauty of Wordsworth. Nevertheless, there is a boyish warmth to Lord Dunsany's appreciation. "Poets are all incomparable," he confesses, and then, with his suggestive irony, he adds, "It is only the versifiers who resemble the great ones." In writing a tribute to his peasant-poet, who later met death fighting with him in the Great War, he adds this hope, which must indeed measure his own hope, that "not too many will be attracted to this book on account of the author being a peasant, lest he come to be praised by the 'how-interesting' school; for know that neither in any class, nor in any country, nor in any age, shall you predict the footfall of Pegasus, who touches the earth where he pleaseth and is bridled by whom he will."

It is said that when Dunsany was a boy his reading was watched carefully. He was confined mostly to the Bible, to Grimm and Hans Andersen, and to the literature and mythology of Greece. These were his models, and there are some enthusiastic adherents who see in Dunsany's prose the influence of the King James version of the Testaments; who measure his poetic imagination by the direct influence he had from Greek legend. They claim for him that he has invented a Fate out of Pegāna as inevitable and as binding as the Fate which permeates the dramas of Sophocles and Euripides.

Lord Dunsany does not credit himself with such greatness. He is more modest than his adherents picture him. It is easy to see that he writes in his particular mood because, untaxed by cloying fact, his imagination is free to wander where it will. We give his genius credit for this ability to wander, and we take at its face value what he has to say regarding his workmanship. Facility moves his pen; this confession is found in a letter claiming that "The Queen's Enemies" is the one

of his plays possessing a borrowed theme; he thus forestalls that critic who found the counterpart to this play in Professor Jerram's "Anglice Reddenda", under the title of "A Woman's Revenge."

"It was not only easier, but more amusing, to imagine her character [the Queen's] and all the names of her enemies than to be bothered with reading about her. And since she was a live woman, whenever the Sixth Dynasty was thriving in Egypt, I think she came a little more alive out of my fancy than she might have done out of some dusty book." In other words, Dunsany is forever pointing the way for one to escape facts, which are dull and belong by rights, as he confesses, to "journalists, politicians, owners of encyclopedias, and manufacturers of ugly things."

People are forever reading into Dunsany what he does not wish them to read. In his correspondence, he declares: "When I write of Babylon there are people who cannot see that I write of it for love of Babylon's ways, and they think I'm thinking of London still and our beastly Parliament."

Dunsany pleads that he needs no explanation; that whatever beauty is in his little plays of mood must be taken unanalyzed and in total effect. A close scrutiny would be justified only were the pieces fraught, as Synge's "Riders to the Sea" and "The Shadow of the Glen" are fraught, with human valuation. He declares that he wants "to write about men and women and the great forces that have been with them from their cradle up — forces that the centuries have neither aged nor weakened. Not about people who are so interested about the latest mascot or motor that not enough remains when the trivial is sifted from them." But even at that, his people escape him in an ether which leaves us unmoved, yet curious.

He has selected for his themes very simple stories — "so simple," he writes, "that sometimes people of this complex age, being brought up in intricacies, even fail to understand them." He will not have read into "The Gods of the Mountain" anything more than that irony which comes when a person finally gets what he wants. Here are some beggars who wish to be gods, and pretend to be; the real gods come along and make them gods, and in the granting of their desire lies the punishment.

Writing to Stuart Walker, of the Portmanteau Theatre, who was about to put on "The Golden Doom", Lord Dunsany referred to the time-element in his plays. He said:

> The "public" must needs know exactly "when it all happened", so I never neglect to inform them of the time. Since man does not alter, it does not in the least matter what time I put, unless I am writing a play about his clothes or his motor-car, so I put "about the time of the fall of Babylon." It seemed a nice breezy time, but "about the time of the invention of Carter's Pills" would of course do equally well. Well, the result was that they went to the British Museum and got the exact costumes of the period in Babylon, and it did very nicely. There are sure to have been people who said, "Now, my children, you shall come to the theatre and enjoy yourselves, but at the same time you shall learn what it was really like in Babylon." The fact is the schoolmaster has got loose and he must be caged, so that people can enjoy themselves without being pounced on and made to lead better lives, like African natives being carried away by lions while they danced.

This is quoted because so little has been written about Lord Dunsany that we have to rely entirely on his self-revealed spirit to judge wherein the manner of the man and the mood of his plays are one. Not only must the gods be laughing a little at our over-estimate of Lord Dunsany, but he himself must be chuckling at the apparent ease with which he has "put it over" on his admirers. One accepts all his parables in the "Fifty-one Tales", and finds in them agreeableness of style, beauty of thought, striking poetic expression, and the kind of irony one falls into after reading La Fontaine for some time, though La Fontaine beats him at the human game. No critic will deny him one bit of the inherent genius which such imaginative work requires — such a style is easy to imitate, but not so easy to originate. Nor is story-telling acquired through imitation. Lord Dunsany's creative sense has literally come from himself. However much a reader of fairy tales he may have been in his youth, however much people may say that they could easily learn the "trick" by saturating themselves in the "Arabian Nights", the fact remains that Lord Dunsany correlates imaginative facility with marked skill in story-telling.

To the historian of the drama a chronological arrangement of Dunsany's plays may be suggestive. But, in fairness to him, we must take in bulk the seven little dramas we have seen and read, determining therefrom whether he has yet mastered the one-act form; whether, from the act divisions of "The Gods of the Mountain", or "King Argimenes", he would be capable, in the future, of mastering the longer form of play writing. It is our opinion that the Dunsany mood, as he now has stated it, would not spread effectively over a wide surface without the introduction of a more human element; without dealing with more passion than one finds in such a beautiful little piece as "The Tents of the Arabs", which is Dunsany's irony regarding cities coupled with some of his most feeling poetry. There is an historical play, "Alexander", yet to be published. It was started in collaboration with Padraic Colum; but all that remains to mark that association is Colum's dedication affixed to his drama, "Mogu the Wanderer." Is this Dunsany piece "located history"?

Relieved of the same machinery which, in his earlier period, bound Maeterlinck to certain formal expression, and which forever cast a peculiar shadow over the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe, we do not realize as yet what Lord Dunsany would be. Certainly, such a quaint, frivolous conceit as "The Lost Silk Hat" could never foreshadow that he would be happy in the atmosphere of society drama. There is not one of his plays which, as yet, has hinted at a national consciousness, like Yeats's "Cathleen ni Houlihan." He does not seem to be wedded to the cause of the Irish Theatre. Nor has he, from the Irish standpoint, made use of the folklore of Ireland. Interested though he may be in preserving the peasant beauties of his own country, he has not himself come under that immediate influence, even though he is able to appreciate it when it appears.

What does he say further regarding the poetry of Synge? Speaking of his style, he writes:

> New words like these on some great thing are needed in this age, when thought is becoming moulded in old phrases. . . . The simple homeliness of the words in this play ["Deirdre"] reveals both for Synge and for the peasants whom he knew a near familiarity with the world's great impulses such as war and spring. Great words are often wrapped round nothingness, as echoes are

loudest in the emptiest cave. Tawdriness dresses herself gorgeously. But when household words are used about the gods, we know that the gods are very near to the household.

It has been claimed for Lord Dunsany that even as his "Fifty-one Tales" may be taken as a dramatist's notebook, containing jottings which he may, or may not, utilize later in his work, so his little dramas are themselves the quintessence of reticence, wherein only essential dialogue is used. In proof of this, some enthusiasts are prone to compare his method with that of Maeterlinck, in the early "marionette" plays, like "The Princess Maleine", where repetition of dialogue is seemingly trivial in its value. There are passages in Dunsany which are likewise ineffective in their repetition. But, in the last analysis, Maeterlinck's repetition is not unconscious; from it he wrings a psychological effect which Lord Dunsany does not completely obtain. However compelling "The Gods of the Mountain" and "A Night at an Inn" may be, and these are Lord Dunsany at his high-water mark, we cannot, in any way, find a play of his whose greatness is comparable with Maeterlinck's "The Intruder." Yet Dunsany has been compared with the Greeks! He has the weakness which always comes in the wake of romanticism, especially when romanticism will not compromise with realism. Dunsany is weighted with trappings which dull his psychology and its effect.

We may ask whether this dramatist has the power of individualizing his characters. On close examination, we arrive at the conclusion that he can, although his characterization is of the slightest stroke. There is an individuality to *Agmar*, the beggar, in "The Gods of the Mountain", but his associates are a dead-level group as character goes, more so than Maeterlinck's blind in "The Blind", who at least show psychological variation.

One perceives differences of bearing in the two burglars who stand before "The Glittering Gate", but not those human peculiarities which would make us interested rather than curious in regard to what they are doing there. Even Dunsany's children in "The Golden Doom", about whom he has written, do not strike us with that simplicity, with that nearness to heaven about them that characterizes little *Yniold*, for instance, in Maeterlinck's "Pélleas and Mélisande."

Enthusiastic though one may be about Dunsany's plays, it is not wise to place his accomplishment too high in the rank of genius, though in him rests a most hopeful sign for the years to come. Were he to do nothing more, we might say that his "The Gods of the Mountain" would establish him definitely in the history of modern drama, but would not place him above Synge,—nor even above Yeats, who, were he to fail in drama, would live in Irish poetry. Dunsany would, however, even on the merits of this one play, be unique and abundantly dramatic in an external way.

That Dunsany is sincerely interested in art may be seen from his financial contributions to the Irish Theatre as recorded by George Moore, and his contributions to the Theatre of Art in Florence, as recorded by Gordon Craig. His correspondence with Stuart Walker, of the Portmanteau Theatre, shows that, though his dramas are conceived with ease, there is a definiteness in his mind as to their interpretation. They are dramas that lend themselves very readily to the new scenery, even as his tales called forth all that was creative in their original illustrator, Sime. And in the same way that the new scenery has its limitations, so have the Dunsany dramas.

Dunsany has established a mannerism which is interesting, and all the more so, coming at a time when people were growing impatient and weary of realism. In his plays there is none of that big, poetic quality, of that universal appeal, which characterizes Hazelton and Benrimo's "The Yellow Jacket." They are both exotics, but "The Yellow Jacket", imitative though the work may be, of Chinese convention, has more claim to greatness, if not to depth. When one witnesses Dunsany's plays in succession, their mood begins to pall slightly, even as one sometimes tires of the thickness of Poe's morbid aroma.

At the Neighborhood Playhouse, in New York, "The Queen's Enemies" was given with scenery which encompassed the very large imaginative locality of the piece. "A Night at an Inn" has been done in that same mysterious manner. Breathless pauses, sepulchral tones, and shadowy action punctuate all of Dunsany's dramas. Stuart Walker, in his Portmanteau Theatre, has given three of the little plays with dignity of bearing and richness of colour. They have proven effective because they have appealed to the wonder element which realistic dramas heretofore discounted. That is why Dunsany is so potent a factor at present.

We do not wish to rate him too highly; we wish to see a further development. He is only forty. But he is inclined to take a fatalistic attitude toward the part he is playing in the War. He escaped death in his campaign through the Transvaal during the Boer War, traces of an experience which critics joyously announce may be discovered in "King Argimenes." He has recovered from a wound received during the Dublin riots. Thus far, he has moved safely through battle in France. He writes:

> Sometimes I think that no man is taken hence until he has done the work that he is here to do, and, looking back on five battles and other escapes from death, this theory seems only plausible; but how can one hold it when one thinks of the deaths of Shelley and Keats!
>
> But in case I shall not be able to explain my work, I think the first thing to tell them [the public] is that it does not need explanation. One does not explain a sunset, nor does one need to explain a work of art. One may analyze, of course; that is profitable and interesting, but the growing demand to be told What It's All About before one can even enjoy becomes absurd.

Yes, the more we consider Lord Dunsany, the more we are reminded of Shelley's sonnet on "Ozymandias." He too is a traveller from an antique land, who has witnessed the crumbling city of Ozymandias, King of Kings.

As he wrote in barracks, on January 4, 1917, to a friend:

> Well, I suppose I am a great traveller: of any country that I have ever been to I have scarcely ever written, — though all we see probably influences us, — but it is of the countries I have not travelled in that I have written, the longing for travel perhaps moving my pen, the spirit telling of lands where it had gone and the body had not followed. For instance, I have travelled a thousand miles up the Nile, and lived a while in the Sahara; and I have written a tale of a journey down a vast river called "Idle Days on the Yan", and a tale of the Sahara called "A Story of Land and Sea." But those tales were written before I made the journeys that might be supposed to have influenced them. "How inaccurate such tales must be," I can imagine some dull soul exclaiming; but to such a person I would say, "There are other things in the world than facts, my friend."

> And I would leave him to go away and read Bradshaw, his railway guide, which is the quintessence of fact, unspoiled by style, fancy, philosophy, enthusiasm, mirth, or anything at all to stand in the way of a dull soul in silent commune with unromantic fact.

Let us be thankful that the theatre has such a man as this working for it. But let us, in our sincere estimate of him, save Dunsany from his ecstatic friends.

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

By LORD DUNSANY

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PERSONS

Agmar . Slag . . Ulf . . Oogno . Thahn . Mlan . A Thief	*Beggars*
Oorander Illanaun Akmos .	*Citizens*

The Dromedary Men
Citizens, etc.
The Others

Scene: *The East*

CAST

First produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, on June 1st, 1911, with the following cast:

Oogno	*Beggars*	Mr. W. A. Warburton
Thahn	*Beggars*	Mr. Claude Rains
Ulf	*Beggars*	Mr. H. R. Hignett
Agmar	*Beggars*	Mr. Charles V. France
Slag	*Beggars*	Mr. Charles Maude
A Thief	*Beggars*	Mr. Lawrence Hanray
Mlan	*Beggars*	Mr. R. P. Lamb
Oorander	*Citizens*	Mr. J. Dickson Kenwin
Akmos	*Citizens*	Mr. Ernest Graham
Illanaun	*Citizens*	Mr. Grindon Bentley
Bashara	*Citizens*	Mr. F. G. Clifton
Thulek	*Citizens*	Mr. G. Carr
Thoharmas	*Citizens*	Mr. Kenneth Dennys
Haz	*Citizens*	Mr. B. Hatton Sinclair
Theedes	*Citizens*	Mr. A. Jones
Lirra	*Citizens*	Miss Anne Carew
Eselunza	*Citizens*	Miss E. Risdon
Thonion Alara	*Citizens*	Miss V. Whitaker
Ylax		Miss M. Ronsard
Ackarnees		Mr. Norman Page
A Dromedary Man		Mr. W. Black
Nepnek of the Meadows		Miss Enid Rose
The Others		Mr. E. Lyall Swete Mr. A. Ackerman Mr. K. Black Mr. H. Cooper Mr. E. Leverett Mr. G. Wilkinson Mr. J. O'Brien

The scenery was designed and painted by Mr. Walter Bayes, with the exception of the first set, for which designs were made by Mr. S. H. Sime.

CAST

On October 27th, 1916, "The Gods of the Mountain" was produced for a second time in America, by Stuart Walker, in his Portmanteau Theatre, at Mount Holyoke, Massachusetts. The cast, which subsequently played 28 performances during a repertory season in New York, was as follows:

ULF	*Beggars*	Mr. Edgar Stehli
OOGNO	*Beggars*	Mr. Lew Medbury
THAHN	*Beggars*	Mr. Fra k J. Zimmerer
AGMAR	*Beggars*	Mr. Stuart Walker
SLAG	*Beggars*	Mr. Gregory Kelly
A THIEF	*Beggars*	Mr. Robert Cook
MLAN	*Beggars*	Miss Agnes Rogers
OORANDER	*Citizens*	Mr. Willard Webster
ILLANAUN	*Citizens*	Mr. Ward Thornton
AKMOS	*Citizens*	Mr. McKay Morris
A MOTHER		Miss Florence Wollersen
AN OLD WOMAN WHO SELLS WATER		Miss Judith Lowry
A DROMEDARY MAN		Mr. Edmond Crenshaw
A WOMAN WHO SINGS		Miss Dorothea Carothers
A CHARMER OF SNAKES		Miss Gitruda Tritjanski

The scenes, costumes, and properties for this production were designed by Mr. Frank J. Zimmerer. Mr. Walker made use of music especially composed by Mr. Arthur Farwell.

THE GODS OF THE MOUNTAIN

ACT I

[*Outside a city wall.* THREE BEGGARS *are seated upon the ground*]

OOGNO. These days are bad for beggary.

THAHN. They are bad.

ULF [*an older beggar but not gray*]. Some evil has befallen the rich ones of this city. They take no joy any longer in benevolence, but are become sour and miserly at heart. Alas for them! I sometimes sigh for them when I think of this.

OOGNO. Alas for them! A miserly heart must be a sore affliction.

THAHN. A sore affliction indeed, and bad for our calling.

OOGNO [*reflectively*]. They have been thus for many months. What thing has befallen them?

THAHN. Some evil thing.

ULF. There has been a comet come near to the earth of late and the earth has been parched and sultry so that the gods are drowsy and all those things that are divine in man, such as benevolence, drunkenness, extravagance, and song, have faded and died and have not been replenished by the gods.

OOGNO. It has indeed been sultry.

THAHN. I have seen the comet o' nights.

ULF. The gods are drowsy.

OOGNO. If they awake not soon and make this city worthy again of our order I for one shall forsake the calling and buy a shop and sit at ease in the shade and barter for gain.

THAHN. You will keep a shop?

[*Enter* AGMAR *and* SLAG. AGMAR, *though poorly dressed, is tall, imperious, and older than* ULF. SLAG *follows behind him*]

AGMAR. Is this a beggar who speaks?

OOGNO. Yes, master, a poor beggar.

AGMAR. How long has the calling of beggary existed?

OOGNO. Since the building of the first city, master.

AGMAR. And when has a beggar ever followed a trade? When has he ever haggled and bartered and sat in a shop?

OOGNO. Why, he has never done so.

AGMAR. Are you he that shall be first to forsake the calling?

OOGNO. Times are bad for the calling here.

THAHN. They are bad.

AGMAR. So you would forsake the calling?

OOGNO. The city is unworthy of our calling. The gods are drowsy and all that is divine in man is dead. [*To* THIRD BEGGAR] Are not the gods drowsy?

ULF. They are drowsy in their mountains away at Marma. The seven green idols are drowsy. Who is this that rebukes us?

THAHN. Are you some great merchant, master? Perhaps you will help a poor man that is starving.

SLAG. My master a merchant! No, no. He is no merchant. My master is no merchant.

OOGNO. I perceive that he is some lord in disguise. The gods have woken and have sent him to save us.

SLAG. No, no. You do not know my master. You do not know him.

THAHN. Is he the Soldan's self that has come to rebuke us?

AGMAR. I am a beggar, and an old beggar.

SLAG [*with great pride*]. There is none like my master. No traveller has met with cunning like to his, not even those that come from Æthiopia.

ULF. We make you welcome to our town, upon which an evil has fallen, the days being bad for beggary.

AGMAR. Let none who has known the mystery of roads or has felt the wind arising new in the morning, or who has called forth out of the souls of men divine benevolence, ever speak any more of any trade or of the miserable gains of shops and the trading men.

OOGNO. I but spoke hastily, the times being bad.

AGMAR. I will put right the times.

SLAG. There is nothing that my master cannot do.

AGMAR [*To* SLAG]. Be silent and attend to me. I do not know this city. I have travelled from far, having somewhat exhausted the city of Ackara.

SLAG. My master was three times knocked down and injured by carriages there, once he was killed and seven times beaten and robbed, and every time he was generously compensated. He had nine diseases, many of them mortal —

AGMAR. Be silent, Slag. — Have you any thieves among the calling here?

ULF. We have a few that we call thieves here, master, but they would scarcely seem thieves to you. They are not good thieves.

AGMAR. I shall need the best thief you have.

[*Enter two citizens, richly clad,* ILLANAUN *and* OORANDER]

ILLANAUN. Therefore we will send galleons to Ardaspes.

OORANDER. Right to Ardaspes through the silver gates.

[AGMAR *transfers the thick handle of his long staff to his left armpit, he droops on to it and it supports his weight; he is upright no longer. His right arm hangs limp and useless. He hobbles up to the citizens imploring alms*]

ILLANAUN. I am sorry. I cannot help you. There have been too many beggars here and we must decline alms for the good of the town.

AGMAR [*sitting down and weeping*]. I have come from far.

[ILLANAUN *presently returns and gives* AGMAR *a coin. Exit* ILLANAUN. AGMAR, *erect again, walks back to the others*]

AGMAR. We shall need fine raiment; let the thief start at once. Let it rather be green raiment.

BEGGAR. I will go and fetch the thief. [*Exit*]

ULF. We will dress ourselves as lords and impose upon the city.

OOGNO. Yes, yes; we will say we are ambassadors from a far land.

ULF. And there will be good eating.

SLAG [*in an undertone to* ULF]. But you do not know my master. Now that you have suggested that we shall go as lords, he will make a better suggestion. He will suggest that we should go as kings.

ULF. Beggars as kings!

SLAG. Ay. You do not know my master.

ULF. [*To* AGMAR] What do you bid us do?

AGMAR. You shall first come by the fine raiment in the manner I have mentioned.

ULF. And what then, master?

AGMAR. Why, then we shall go as gods.

BEGGARS. As gods!

AGMAR. As gods. Know you the land through which I have lately come in my wanderings? Marma, where the gods are carved from green stone in the mountains. They sit all seven of them against the hills. They sit there motionless and travellers worship them.

ULF. Yes, yes, we know those gods. They are much reverenced here, but they are drowsy and send us nothing beautiful.

AGMAR. They are of green jade. They sit cross-legged with their right elbows resting on their left hands, the right forefinger pointing upward. We will come into the city disguised, from the direction of Marma, and will claim to be these gods. We must be seven as they are. And when we sit we must sit cross-legged as they do, with the right hand uplifted.

ULF. This is a bad city in which to fall into the hands of oppressors, for the judges lack amiability here as the merchants lack benevolence, ever since the gods forgot them.

AGMAR. In our ancient calling a man may sit at one street corner for fifty years doing the one thing, and yet a day may come when it is well for him to rise up and do another thing while the timorous man starves.

ULF. Also it were well not to anger the gods.

AGMAR. Is not all life a beggary to the gods? Do they not see all men

always begging of them and asking alms with incense, and bells, and subtle devices?

OOGNO. Yes, all men indeed are beggars before the gods.

AGMAR. Does not the mighty Soldan often sit by the agate altar in his royal temple as we sit at a street corner or by a palace gate?

ULF. It is even so.

AGMAR. Then will the gods be glad when we follow the holy calling with new devices and with subtlety, as they are glad when the priests sing a new song.

ULF. Yet I have a fear.

[*Enter* TWO MEN, *talking*]

AGMAR. [*To* SLAG] Go you into the city before us and let there be a prophecy there which saith that the gods who are carven from green rock in the mountain shall one day arise in Marma and come here in the guise of men.

SLAG. Yes, master. Shall I make the prophecy myself? Or shall it be found in some old document?

AGMAR. Let some one have seen it once in some rare document. Let it be spoken of in the market place.

SLAG. It shall be spoken of, master.

[SLAG *lingers.* *Enter* THIEF *and* THAHN]

OOGNO. This is our thief.

AGMAR [*encouragingly*]. Ah, he is a quick thief.

THIEF. I could only procure you three green raiments, master. The city is not now well supplied with them; moreover, it is a very suspicious city and without shame for the baseness of its suspicions.

SLAG. [*To a* BEGGAR] This is not thieving.

THIEF. I could do no more, master. I have not practised thieving all my life.

AGMAR. You have got something: it may serve our purpose. How long have you been thieving?

THIEF. I stole first when I was ten.

SLAG [*in horror*]. When he was ten!

AGMAR. We must tear them up and divide them amongst the seven. [*To* THAHN] Bring me another beggar.

SLAG. When my master was ten he had already to slip by night out of two cities.

OOGNO [*admiringly*]. Out of two cities?

SLAG [*nodding his head*]. In his native city they do not now know what became of the golden cup that stood in the Lunar Temple.

AGMAR. Yes, into seven pieces.

ULF. We will each wear a piece of it over our rags.

OOGNO. Yes, yes, we shall look fine.

AGMAR. That is not the way that we shall disguise ourselves.

OOGNO. Not cover our rags?

AGMAR. No, no. The first who looked closely would say, "These are only beggars. They have disguised themselves."

ULF. What shall we do?

AGMAR. Each of the seven shall wear a piece of the green raiment underneath his rags. And peradventure here and there a little shall show through; and men shall say, "These seven have disguised themselves as beggars. But we know not what they be."

SLAG. Hear my wise master.

OOGNO [*in admiration*]. *He* is a beggar.

ULF. He is an *old* beggar.

CURTAIN

ACT II

[*The Metropolitan Hall of the city of Kongros.* CITIZENS, *etc.*]

[*Enter the* SEVEN BEGGARS *with green silk under their rags*]

OORANDER. Who are you and whence come you?

AGMAR. Who may say what we are or whence we come?

OORANDER. What are these beggars and why do they come here?

AGMAR. Who said to you that we were beggars?

OORANDER. Why do these men come here?

AGMAR. Who said to you that we were men?

ILLANAUN. Now, by the moon!

AGMAR. My sister.

ILLANAUN. What?

AGMAR. My little sister.

SLAG. Our little sister the moon. She comes to us at evenings away in the mountains of Marma. She trips over the mountains when she is young.

When she is young and slender she comes and dances before us, and when she is old and unshapely she hobbles away from the hills.

AGMAR. Yet is she young again and forever nimble with youth; yet she comes dancing back. The years are not able to curb her nor to bring gray hairs to her brethren.

OORANDER. This is not wonted.

ILLANAUN. It is not in accordance with custom.

AKMOS. Prophecy hath not thought it.

SLAG. She comes to us new and nimble, remembering olden loves.

OORANDER. It were well that prophets should come and speak to us.

ILLANAUN. This hath not been in the past. Let prophets come. Let prophets speak to us of future things.

[*The* BEGGARS *seat themselves upon the floor in the attitude of the* SEVEN GODS OF MARMA]

CITIZEN. I heard men speak to-day in the market place. They speak of a prophecy read somewhere of old. It says the seven gods shall come from Marma in the guise of men.

ILLANAUN. Is this a true prophecy?

OORANDER. It is all the prophecy we have. Man without prophecy is like a sailor going by night over uncharted seas. He knows not where are the rocks nor where the havens. To the man on watch all things ahead are black and the stars guide him not, for he knows not what they are.

ILLANAUN. Should we not investigate this prophecy?

OORANDER. Let us accept it. It is as the small, uncertain light of a lantern, carried it may be by a drunkard, but along the shore of some haven. Let us be guided.

AKMOS. It may be that they are but benevolent gods.

AGMAR. There is no benevolence greater than our benevolence.

ILLANAUN. Then we need do little: they portend no danger to us.

AGMAR. There is no anger greater than our anger.

OORANDER. Let us make sacrifice to them if they be gods.

AKMOS. We humbly worship you, if ye be gods.

ILLANAUN [*kneeling too*]. You are mightier than all men and hold high rank among other gods and are lords of this our city, and have the thunder as your plaything and the whirlwind and the eclipse and all the destinies of human tribes — if ye be gods.

AGMAR. Let the pestilence not fall at once upon this city, as it had indeed designed to; let not the earthquake swallow it all immediately up amid the howls of the thunder; let not infuriated armies overwhelm those that escape — if we be gods —

POPULACE [*in horror*]. If we be gods!

OORANDER. Come, let us sacrifice.

ILLANAUN. Bring lambs.

AKMOS. Quick! Quick!

[*Exeunt some*]

SLAG [*with solemn air*]. This god is a very divine god.

THAHN. He is no common god.

MLAN. Indeed he has made us.

CITIZEN. [*To* SLAG] He will not punish us, master? None of the gods will punish us? We will make a sacrifice, a good sacrifice.

ANOTHER. We will sacrifice a lamb that the priests have blessed.

FIRST CITIZEN. Master, you are not wroth with us?

SLAG. Who may say what cloudy dooms are rolling up in the mind of the eldest of the gods? He is no common god like us. Once a shepherd went by him in the mountains and doubted as he went. He sent a doom after that shepherd.

CITIZEN. Master, we have not doubted.

SLAG. And the doom found him on the hills at evening.

SECOND CITIZEN. It shall be a good sacrifice, master.

[*Re-enter with a dead lamb and fruits. They offer the lamb on an altar where there is fire, and fruits before the altar*]

THAHN [*stretching out a hand to a lamb upon an altar*]. That leg is not being cooked at all.

ILLANAUN. It is strange that gods should be thus anxious about the cooking of a leg of lamb.

OORANDER. It is strange certainly.

ILLANAUN. Almost I had said that it was a man spoke then.

OORANDER [*stroking his beard and regarding the* SECOND BEGGAR]. Strange. Strange, certainly.

AGMAR. Is it then strange that the gods love roasted flesh? For this purpose they keep the lightning. When

the lightning flickers about the limbs of men there comes to the gods in Marma a pleasant smell, even a smell of roasting. Sometimes the gods, being pacific, are pleased to have roasted instead the flesh of lamb. It is all one to the gods; let the roasting stop.

OORANDER. No, no, gods of the mountains!

OTHERS. No, no.

OORANDER. Quick, let us offer the flesh to them. If they eat, all is well.

[*They offer it; the* BEGGARS *eat, all but* AGMAR, *who watches*]

ILLANAUN. One who was ignorant, one who did not know, had almost said that they ate like hungry men.

OTHERS. Hush!

AKMOS. Yet they look as though they had not had a meal like this for a long time.

OORANDER. They have a hungry look.

AGMAR [*who has not eaten*]. I have not eaten since the world was very new and the flesh of men was tenderer than now. These younger gods have learned the habit of eating from the lions.

OORANDER. O oldest of divinities, partake, partake.

AGMAR. It is not fitting that such as I should eat. None eat but beasts and men and the younger gods. The sun and the moon and the nimble lightning and I — we may kill and we may madden, but we do not eat.

AKMOS. If he but eat of our offering he cannot overwhelm us.

ALL. Oh, ancient deity, partake, partake.

AGMAR. Enough. Let it be enough that these have condescended to this bestial and human habit.

ILLANAUN. [*To* AKMOS] And yet he is not unlike a beggar whom I saw not so long since.

OORANDER. But beggars eat.

ILLANAUN. Now I never knew a beggar yet who would refuse a bowl of Woldery wine.

AKMOS. This is no beggar.

ILLANAUN. Nevertheless let us offer him a bowl of Woldery wine.

AKMOS. You do wrong to doubt him.

ILLANAUN. I do but wish to prove his divinity. I will fetch the Woldery wine. [*Exit*]

AKMOS. He will not drink. Yet if he does, then he will not overwhelm us. Let us offer him the wine.

[*Re-enter* ILLANAUN *with a goblet*]

FIRST BEGGAR. It is Woldery wine!

SECOND BEGGAR. It is Woldery!

THIRD BEGGAR. A goblet of Woldery wine!

FOURTH BEGGAR. O blessed day!

MLAN. O happy times!

SLAG. O my wise master!

[ILLANAUN *takes the goblet. All the* BEGGARS *stretch out their hands, including* AGMAR. ILLANAUN *gives it to* AGMAR. AGMAR *takes it solemnly, and very carefully pours it upon the ground*]

FIRST BEGGAR. He has spilt it.

SECOND BEGGAR. He has spilt it.

[AGMAR *sniffs the fumes, loquitur*]

AGMAR. It is a fitting libation. Our anger is somewhat appeased.

ANOTHER BEGGAR. But it was Woldery!

AKMOS [*kneeling to* AGMAR]. Master, I am childless, and I —

AGMAR. Trouble us not now. It is the hour at which the gods are accustomed to speak to the gods in the language of the gods, and if Man heard us he would guess the futility of his destiny, which were not well for Man. Begone! Begone!

ONE LINGERS [*loquitur*]. Master —

AGMAR. Begone!

[*Exeunt.* AGMAR *takes up a piece of meat and begins to eat it; the* BEGGARS *rise and stretch themselves: they laugh, but* AGMAR *eats hungrily*]

OOGNO. Ah! Now we have come into our own.

THAHN. Now we have alms.

SLAG. Master! My wise master!

ULF. These are the good days, the good days; and yet I have a fear.

SLAG. What do you fear? There is nothing to fear. No man is as wise as my master.

ULF. I fear the gods whom we pretend to be.

SLAG. The gods?

AGMAR [*taking a chunk of meat from his lips*]. Come hither, Slag.

SLAG [*going up to him*]. Yes, master.

AGMAR. Watch in the doorway while I eat. [SLAG *goes to the doorway*] Sit in the attitude of a god. Warn me if any of the citizens approach.

[SLAG *sits in the doorway in the attitude of a god, back to the audience*]

OOGNO. [*To* AGMAR] But, master, shall we not have Woldery wine?

AGMAR. We shall have all things if only we are wise at first for a little.

THAHN. Master, do any suspect us?

AGMAR. We must be *very* wise.

THAHN. But if we are not wise, master?

AGMAR. Why, then death may come to us —

THAHN. O master!

AGMAR. — slowly.

[*All stir uneasily except* SLAG, *who sits motionless in the doorway*]

OOGNO. Do they believe us, master?

SLAG [*half turning his head*]. Someone comes.

[SLAG *resumes his position*]

AGMAR [*putting away his meat*]. We shall soon know now.

[*All take up the attitude. Enter* ONE, *loquitur*]

ONE. Master, I want the god that does not eat.

AGMAR. I am he.

ONE. Master, my child was bitten in the throat by a death-adder at noon. Spare him, master; he still breathes, but slowly.

AGMAR. Is he indeed your child?

ONE. He is surely my child, master.

AGMAR. Was it your wont to thwart him in his play, while he was strong and well?

ONE. I never thwarted him, master.

AGMAR. Whose child is Death?

ONE. Death is the child of the gods.

AGMAR. Do you that never thwarted your child in his play ask this of the gods?

ONE [*with some horror, perceiving* AGMAR'S *meaning*]. Master!

AGMAR. Weep not. For all the houses that men have builded are the play-fields of this child of the gods.

[*The* MAN *goes away in silence, not weeping*]

OOGNO [*taking* THAHN *by the wrist*]. Is this indeed a man?

AGMAR. A man, a man, and until just now a hungry one.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Same room
A few days have elapsed
Seven thrones shaped like mountain-crags stand along the back of the stage. On these the BEGGARS *are lounging. The* THIEF *is absent*

MLAN. Never had beggars such a time.

OOGNO. Ah, the fruits and tender lamb!

THAHN. The Woldery wine!

SLAG. It was better to see my master's wise devices than to have fruit and lamb and Woldery wine.

MLAN. Ah! When they spied on him to see if he would eat when they went away!

OOGNO. When they questioned him concerning the gods and Man!

THAHN. When they asked him why the gods permitted cancer!

SLAG. Ah, my wise master!

MLAN. How well his scheme has succeeded!

OOGNO. How far away is hunger!

THAHN. It is even like to one of last year's dreams, the trouble of a brief night long ago.

OOGNO [*laughing*]. Ho, ho, ho! To see them pray to us.

AGMAR. When we were beggars did we not speak as beggars? Did we not whine as they? Was not our mien beggarly?

OOGNO. We were the pride of our calling.

AGMAR. Then now that we are gods, let us be as gods, and not mock our worshippers.

ULF. I think that the gods *do* mock their worshippers.

AGMAR. The gods have never mocked us. We are above all pinnacles that we have ever gazed at in dreams.

ULF. I think that when man is high then most of all are the gods wont to mock him.

THIEF [*entering*]. Master! I have been with those that know all and see all. I have been with the thieves, master. They know me for one of the craft, but they do not know me as being one of us.

AGMAR. Well, well!

THIEF. There is danger, master, there is great danger.

AGMAR. You mean that they suspect that we are men.

THIEF. That they have long done, master. I mean that they will know it. Then we are lost.
AGMAR. Then they do not know it.
THIEF. They do not know it yet, but they will know it, and we are lost.
AGMAR. When will they know it?
THIEF. Three days ago they suspected us.
AGMAR. More than you think suspected us, but have any dared to say so?
THIEF. No, master.
AGMAR. Then forget your fears, my thief.
THIEF. Two men went on dromedaries three days ago to see if the gods were still at Marma.
AGMAR. They went to Marma!
THIEF. Yes, three days ago.
OOGNO. We are lost!
AGMAR. They went three days ago?
THIEF. Yes, on dromedaries.
AGMAR. They should be back to-day.
OOGNO. We are lost!
THAHN. We are lost!
THIEF. They must have seen the green jade idols sitting against the mountains. They will say, "The gods are still at Marma." And we shall be burnt.
SLAG. My master will yet devise a plan.
AGMAR. [*To the* THIEF] Slip away to some high place and look toward the desert and see how long we have to devise a plan.
SLAG. My master will find a plan.
OOGNO. He has taken us into a trap.
THAHN. His wisdom is our doom.
SLAG. He will find a wise plan yet.
THIEF [*re-entering*]. It is too late!
AGMAR. It is too late!
THIEF. The dromedary men are here.
OOGNO. We are lost!
AGMAR. Be silent! I must think.

[*They all sit still.* CITIZENS *enter and prostrate themselves.* AGMAR *sits deep in thought*]

ILLANAUN. [*To* AGMAR] Two holy pilgrims have gone to your sacred shrines, wherein you were wont to sit before you left the mountains. [AGMAR *says nothing*] They return even now.
AGMAR. They left us here and went to find the gods? A fish once took a journey into a far country to find the sea.
ILLANAUN. Most reverend deity, their piety is so great that they have gone to worship even your shrines.
AGMAR. I know these men that have great piety. Such men have often prayed to me before, but their prayers are not acceptable. They little love the gods; their only care is their piety. I know these pious ones. They will say that the seven gods were still at Marma. They will lie and say that we were still at Marma. So shall they seem more pious to you all, pretending that they alone have seen the gods. Fools shall believe them and share in their damnation.
OORANDER. [*To* ILLANAUN]. Hush! You anger the gods.
ILLANAUN. I am not sure whom I anger.
OORANDER. It may be they are the gods.
ILLANAUN. Where are these men from Marma?
CITIZEN. Here are the dromedary men; they are coming now.
ILLANAUN. [*To* AGMAR] The holy pilgrims from your shrine are come to worship you.
AGMAR. The men are doubters. How the gods hate the word! Doubt ever contaminated virtue. Let them be cast into prison and not besmirch your purity. [*Rising*] Let them not enter here.
ILLANAUN. But oh, most reverend deity from the Mountain, we also doubt, most reverend deity.
AGMAR. You have chosen. You have chosen. And yet it is not too late. Repent and cast these men in prison and it may not be too late. *The gods have never wept.* And yet when they think upon damnation and the dooms that are withering a myriad bones, then almost, were they not divine, they could weep. Be quick! Repent of your doubt.

[*Enter the* DROMEDARY MEN]

ILLANAUN. Most reverend deity, it is a mighty doubt.
CITIZENS. *Nothing has killed him! They are not the gods!*
SLAG. [*To* AGMAR] You have a plan, my master. You have a plan.
AGMAR. Not yet, Slag.
ILLANAUN. [*To* OORANDER] These are the men that went to the shrines at Marma.

Oorander [*in a loud, clear voice*]. Were the Gods of the Mountain seated still at Marma, or were they not there?

[*The* Beggars *get up hurriedly from their thrones*]

Dromedary Man. They were not there.

Illanaun. They were not there?

Dromedary Man. Their shrines were empty.

Oorander. Behold the Gods of the Mountain!

Akmos. They have indeed come from Marma.

Oorander. Come. Let us go away to prepare a sacrifice. A mighty sacrifice to atone for our doubting.

[*Exeunt*]

Slag. My most wise master!

Agmar. No, no, Slag. I do not know what has befallen. When I went by Marma only two weeks ago the idols of green jade were still seated there.

Oogno. We are saved now.

Thahn. Ay, we are saved.

Agmar. We are saved, but I know not how.

Oogno. Never had beggars such a time.

Thief. I will go out and watch.

[*He creeps out*]

Ulf. Yet I have a fear.

Oogno. A fear? Why, we are saved.

Ulf. Last night I dreamed.

Oogno. What was your dream?

Ulf. It was nothing. I dreamed that I was thirsty and one gave me Woldery wine; yet there was a fear in my dream.

Thahn. When I drink Woldery wine I am afraid of nothing.

Thief [*re-entering*]. They are making a pleasant banquet ready for us; they are killing lambs, and girls are there with fruits, and there is to be much Woldery wine.

Mlan. Never had beggars such a time.

Agmar. Do any doubt us now?

Thief. I do not know.

Mlan. When will the banquet be?

Thief. When the stars come out.

Oogno. Ah! It is sunset already. There will be good eating.

Thahn. We shall see the girls come in with baskets upon their heads.

Oogno. There will be fruits in the bask ts.

Thahn. All the fruits of the valley.

Mlan. Oh, how long we have wandered along the ways of the world

Slag. Oh, how hard they were!

Thahn. And how dusty!

Oogno. And how little wine!

Mlan. How long we have asked and asked, and for how much!

Agmar. We to whom all things are coming now at last!

Thief. I fear lest my art forsake me now that good things come without stealing.

Agmar. You will need your art no longer.

Slag. The wisdom of my master shall suffice us all our days.

[*Enter a frightened* Man. *He kneels before* Agmar *and abases his forehead*]

Man. Master, we implore you, the people beseech you.

[Agmar *and the* Beggars *in the attitude of the gods sit silent*]

Man. Master, it is terrible. [*The* Beggars *maintain silence*] It is terrible when you wander in the evening. It is terrible on the edge of the desert in the evening. Children die when they see you.

Agmar. In the desert? When did you see us?

Man. Last night, master. You were terrible last night. You were terrible in the gloaming. When your hands were stretched out and groping. You were feeling for the city.

Agmar. Last night do you say?

Man. You were terrible in the gloaming!

Agmar. You yourself saw us?

Man. Yes, master, you were terrible. Children too saw you and they died.

Agmar. You say you saw us?

Man. Yes, master. Not as you are now, but otherwise. We implore you, master, not to wander at evening. You are terrible in the gloaming. You are ——

Agmar. You say we appeared not as we are now. How did we appear to you?

Man. Otherwise, master, otherwise.

Agmar. But how did we appear to you?

Man. You were all green, master, all green in the gloaming, all of rock again as you used to be in the mountains. Master, we can bear to see

you in flesh like men, but when we see rock walking it is terrible, it is terrible.

AGMAR. That is how we appeared to you?

MAN. Yes, master. Rock should not walk. When children see it they do not understand. Rock should not walk in the evening.

AGMAR. There have been doubters of late. Are they satisfied?

MAN. Master, they are terrified. Spare us, master.

AGMAR. It is wrong to doubt. Go and be faithful. [*Exit* MAN]

SLAG. What have they seen, master?

AGMAR. They have seen their own fears dancing in the desert. They have seen something green after the light was gone, and some child has told them a tale that it was us. I do not know what they have seen. What should they have seen?

ULF. Something was coming this way from the desert, he said.

SLAG. What should come from the desert?

AGMAR. They are a foolish people.

ULF. That man's white face has seen some frightful thing.

SLAG. A frightful thing?

ULF. That man's face has been near to some frightful thing.

AGMAR. It is only we that have frightened them and their fears have made them foolish.

[*Enter an* ATTENDANT *with a torch or lantern which he places in a receptacle. Exit*]

THAHN. Now we shall see the faces of the girls when they come to the banquet.

MLAN. Never had beggars such a time.

AGMAR. Hark! They are coming. I hear footsteps.

THAHN. The dancing girls! They are coming!

THIEF. There is no sound of flutes, they said they would come with music.

OOGNO. What heavy boots they have; they sound like feet of stone.

THAHN. I do not like to hear their heavy tread. Those that would dance to *us* must be light of foot.

AGMAR. I shall not smile at them if they are not airy.

MLAN. They are coming very slowly. They should come nimbly to us.

THAHN. They should dance as they come. But the footfall is like the footfall of heavy crabs.

ULF [*in a loud voice, almost chanting*]. I have a fear, an old fear and a boding. We have done ill in the sight of the seven gods. Beggars we were and beggars we should have remained. We have given up our calling and come in sight of our doom. I will no longer let my fear be silent; it shall run about and cry; it shall go from me crying, like a dog from out of a doomed city; for my fear has seen calamity and has known an evil thing.

SLAG [*hoarsely*]. Master!

AGMAR [*rising*]. Come, come!

[*They listen. No one speaks. The stony boots come on. Enter in single file through door in right of back, a procession of* SEVEN GREEN MEN, *even hands and faces are green; they wear greenstone sandals; they walk with knees extremely wide apart, as having sat cross-legged for centuries; their right arms and right forefingers point upward, right elbows resting on left hands; they stoop grotesquely. Halfway to the footlights they left wheel. They pass in front of the* SEVEN BEGGARS, *now in terrified attitudes, and six of them sit down in the attitude described, with their backs to the audience. The leader stands, still stooping*]

OOGNO [*cries out just as they wheel left*]. The Gods of the Mountain!

AGMAR [*hoarsely*]. Be still! They are dazzled by the light. They may not see us.

[*The leading* GREEN THING *points his forefinger at the lantern — the flame turns green. When the six are seated the leader points one by one at each of the* SEVEN BEGGARS, *shooting out his forefinger at them. As he does this each beggar in his turn gathers himself back on to his throne and crosses his legs, his right arm goes stiffly upward with forefinger erect, and a staring look of horror comes into his eyes. In this attitude the* BEGGARS *sit motionless while a green light falls upon their faces. The* GODS *go out*]

Presently enter the CITIZENS, *some with victuals and fruit. One touches a beggar's arm and then another's*]

CITIZEN. They are eold; they have turned to stone.

[*All abase themselves, foreheads to the floor*]

ONE. We have doubted them. We have doubted them. They have turned to stone because we have doubted them.

ANOTHER. They were the true gods.

ALL. They were the true gods.

CURTAIN

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